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Beyond Mind II: Further Steps to a Metatranspersonal Philosophy and Psychology

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Some of Wilber's "holoarchies" are gradations of being, which he views as truth itself; however, being is delusion, and its gradations are gradations of delusion. Wilber's supposedly universal ontogenetic holoarchy contradicts all Buddhist Paths, whereas his view of phylogeny contradicts Buddhist Tantra and Dzogchen, which claim delusion/being increase throughout the aeon to finally achieve *reductio ad absurdum*. Wilber presents spiritual healing as ascent; Grof and Washburn represent it as descent—yet they are all equally off the mark. Phenomenologically speaking, the Dzogchen Path is "descending," but not in Washburn's or Grof's sense—and "transpersonal" is not a synonym of "sanity." A synthesis of Wilber, Grof, Washburn, Jung, Laing, Cooper and non-transpersonal authors in the framework of Wisdom traditions is imperative.

This paper is called "Beyond Mind II" because it further explores the territory I dealt with in the paper "Beyond Mind: Steps to a Metatranspersonal Psychology" that in 2000 was published in Volume 19 of this journal. For this paper to be properly understood, it is important to know that the Dzogchen teachings speak of Dzogchen *qua* Base, Dzogchen *qua* Path, and Dzogchen *qua* Fruit, and to have at least a minimal understanding of each of these concepts. Briefly stated, they can be described as follows:

(I) Dzogchen *qua* Base is the original condition of total completeness/plenitude and perfection, which is the true nature of the individual and of the universe in its totality and which consists in actual Buddhahood with its three kayas.¹ This condition has three aspects:

(1) The first one is the essence or ngowo (*ngo bo*) aspect, which is voidness. When the Base is compared to a mirror (as in the Semde [*sems sde*] series of Dzogchen teachings), the essence or ngowo aspect of the Base is illustrated by the mirror's emptiness: since the mirror contains no fixed form, it can reflect and manifest all forms. When Dzogchen *qua* Base is divided into two aspects only, this is its katak (*ka dag*) or "primordial purity" aspect.²

(2) The second aspect is its nature or rangzhin (*rang bzhin*), which is reflectiveness or "luminosity." In terms of the mirror, this is the aspect that causes it never to stop reflecting so long as it continues to be a mirror.

(3) The third aspect is its energy or thukje (*thugs rje*), which consists in the manifold appearances that uninterruptedly manifest and disappear. These appearances are empty of self-nature (Skt., *swabhava shunyata*; Tib., *rang stong*), for they are not subsistent and—in terms of the simile—depend on the mirror's reflectiveness to manifest, and both on the mirror and on the whole of other appearances to be what they are.³ When Dzogchen *qua* Base is divided into two aspects only, the nature or rangzhin and the energy or thukje aspects of the Base are subsumed under the lhundrub (*lhun grub*) or "spontaneous perfection aspect."⁴

In its turn, the energy aspect of Dzogchen *qua* Base manifests in three different ways:⁵

(1) As dang (*gdangs*) energy, which is originally beyond the inside-outside distinction but which, once all three ways of manifestation of energy are active, seems to constitute an interior dimension; all mental experiences of thought, fantasy and so on are expressions of this.

(2) As rölpa (*rol pa*) energy, which does not allow the inside-outside and subject-object dichotomies to establish themselves; its characteristic expressions are most vivid yet immaterial visions, which often feature non-Jungian archetypes.

(3) As tsel (*rtsal*) energy, which seems to constitute an external, objectively existing dimension; its most characteristic expression is the "material" world.

Finally, this condition has three possible functionings:

- (1) *Nirvana*, in which Dzogchen *qua* Base is perfectly realized and functions consummately;
- (2) The neutral condition of the base-of-all or *kunzhi lungmaten* (*kun gzhi lung ma bstan*), in which an element of stupefaction conceals/inhibits the self-recognition⁶ of Dzogchen *qua* Base so that nirvana is not manifest, yet samsara is not functioning either, and which if prolonged by meditational techniques may become a *nirvikalpa* absorption characterized by *nirodha* or cessation;⁷ and
- (3) *Samsara*, in which Dzogchen *qua* Base is perceived invertedly, for the phenomena of energy are perceived as though, rather than being inseparable from the essence and nature aspects of the Base, they existed independently of these aspects and of all other phenomena (i.e., as though they were self-existent).

II) Dzogchen *qua* Path is the temporary patency of Dzogchen *qua* Base while one is treading the Path of Awakening. Its divisions will not be discussed here; suffice to say that in Dzogchen the first level of realization is the *dharmakaya*, which manifests when the true condition of dang energy is realized and thus the true condition of the essence aspect of the Base is disclosed; the second level is the *sambhogakaya*, which manifests when the true condition of rölpa energy is realized and thus the true condition of the nature aspect of the Base is unconcealed; and the third level is the *nirmanakaya*, which manifests when the true nature of tsel energy is realized and thus the true condition of the energy aspect of the Base is unveiled.

(III) Dzogchen *qua* Fruit is the uninterrupted patency of Dzogchen *qua* Base that constitutes the Fruit of Dzogchen. This Fruit corresponds to the indivisibility of the three kayas, which are now forever patent and the functioning of which cannot be impeded or disturbed.

The Gradation of Being

The myth of lila (i.e., of the hide-and-seek of primordial awareness with itself) and the related degenerative vision of spiritual and social human evolution and human history, were transmitted by Wisdom-traditions reportedly sharing common origins and having Mount Kailash as their most sacred place—such as the Bön tradition of the Himalayas, the Shaiva tradition of India, the Zurvanist tradition of Persia, the newer Tantric schools of the different religions of India and the Himalayas, the Ismailian tradition

and so on.⁸ Both the myth and the vision in question make the point that human life involves the arising, in and as the consciousness of each and every individual, of unawareness of the true condition of reality (first of the senses the term *avidya* has in the Dzogchen teachings), and then of the illusion that each and every consciousness, rather than being in all cases the function of a single primordial Gnitiveness,⁹ is a separate experiencer-doer in an alien universe of self-existing multiplicity (second and third of the senses the term *avidya* has in the Dzogchen teachings).¹⁰ This is the core of the delusion that Heraclitus called *lete*¹¹ and Shakyamuni called *avidya*, which progressively develops until, having reached its full development and thus completed its *reductio ad absurdum*, it disconnects itself: in the myth of lila, deluded consciousness, by treading the Path of Awakening, dissolves in the unveiling of the Base that is the true nature of all reality, initially for limited periods while on the Path, and then irreversibly as the Fruit; in the degenerative view of spiritual and social evolution, the dissolution of deluded consciousness in our species puts an end to the Age of Darkness, Age of Degeneration or Iron Age of one cycle, and the recovery of awareness (of) the true condition initiates the Perfect Age, Age of Truth or Golden Age of a new cycle—or, in the last time cycle of a given world system, initiates an equally perfect concluding Millennium, such as prophesized in the Kalachakra Tantra, in the Book of Ismailians, in the Apocalypse and so on.

The teachings of Dzogchen *Atiyoga* and of the Ancient or Nyingmapa tradition of Tibetan Buddhism in general represent the cosmic cycle, aeon, or kalpa as a process of gradual strengthening and acceleration of the vibratory activity at the root of the delusory valuation of thought and the ensuing delusion, the most basic manifestation of which is the phenomenon of being. Thus this phenomenon becomes progressively more accentuated as the cycle unfolds, so that as the degree of being (i.e., the degree of delusion) gradually increases, a gradation of being is produced.¹² However, in the later stages of development of the cosmic cycle, for any given individual the degree of being will also be directly related to the extent to which he or she manages to elude the naked experience of being (an elusion that may be boosted by spiritual techniques). Just as the psycho-cosmic structure of the Divine Comedy is inverted in relation to the standard views according to which Heaven is straight over us rather than being straight under us, the degrees of being increase and decrease in directions that are inverted in regard to the commonsense view of modernity and to that of systems such as Ken Wilber's "integral" psychology,¹³ which reproduce the modern view of human evolution and history as a process of progressive perfecting of the human spirit and society, in direct contradiction with the traditional views of India, China and Tibet (Wilber,

1981, 1995, 2000).¹⁴

In “Beyond Mind” (Capriles, 2000b) and other works (Capriles, 1986, 1989, 1994, 2000a, 2003, 2004, 2005, work in progress 1) I explained how the above vibratory activity, which seems to emanate from, or to be concentrated in, the center of the body at the level of the heart, charges and sustains thoughts of the three types we have considered, giving rise to the pivotal phenomena of *samsara*, such as: the phenomenon of being; the cleavage that separates the mental subject and the continuum of what appears as object; the appearance of self-existence and ultimate importance of entities; the disruption of Total Space-Time-Awareness that gives rise to space, time and knowledge, etc. The vibrations at the root of delusory valuation are spasmodic contractions that take place in the heart *chakra* or focal point, which could be partly compared unto repetitive handclaps trying to produce the illusion that someone concrete and substantial holds something concrete and substantial. At the beginning of the cosmic cycle, the strengthening and increase of the rate of this vibratory activity, and hence the intensification of all that results from it, takes place in a most slow, imperceptible way; however, as the cycle unfolds, it becomes progressively evident that there is no concrete, substantial grasping subject and no concrete, substantial grasped object, and hence the compulsion to obtain the illusion that a concrete, substantial grasper is grasping a concrete and substantial entity exacerbates itself, making the strength and the pace of the spasmodic contractions increase ever more rapidly. As the progressive strengthening and acceleration of the vibratory activity at the root of delusory valuation causes the phenomenon of being to become progressively more accentuated, it makes the cleavage that separates the mental subject from the continuum of what appears as object more extreme, causes the appearance of self-existence and ultimate importance to increase, makes one’s experience of space to become narrower and more fragmented, and causes the velocity of the passing of time to increase. However, in the same proportion in which the appearance of self-existence and ultimate importance increases, it becomes even more evident that there is nothing solid or substantial—and the more evident the fact that there is nothing solid or substantial, the more vibratory rates accelerate in an attempt to find proof of solidity and substantiality, in a typical manifestation of the Thanatic positive feedback loops¹⁵ which are at the root of the processes and experiences I have expressed in terms of the symbolism of the *Divine Comedy* and so on (Capriles, 1986, 1994, 2000a, 2000b, 20003, work in progress 1, work in progress 2).

As the cycle approaches its term, the acceleration of time becomes so rapid as to make itself perceptible, and at the term of the cycle, the conflict that developed throughout the cycle attains the level of “total conflagration,” while

vibratory rates reach a threshold beyond which they cannot go on, and so they crumble like a dog falling flat after trying to bite its own tail with ever-increasing speed—upon which time crumbles (Padmasambhava, 1977). As time crumbles, the phenomenon of being, ek-sistence,¹⁶ space, time, becoming, the cleavage separating the mental subject from the continuum of what appears as object, the illusion of ultimate importance—and in general all that develops along with the basic human delusion, which has attained its zenith—instantly dissolves, putting an end to *samsara*. Therefore, the new Golden Age, Age of Perfection or Age of Truth begins—or, alternatively, we enter the equivalent final Millennium prophesized in the Kalachakra Tantra, in the Book of Ismailians, in the Apocalypse and so on.

Thus it is clear that there is a *partial* analogy between the degenerative evolution in human phylogeny and the ontogenetic processes I have represented in terms of the *Divine Comedy*. In fact, the cosmic time cycle is also a meditative experience undergone by the human individual (Padmasambhava, 1977), in which wayward patterns develop toward the threshold at which delusion may spontaneously crumble and Dzogchen *qua* Path (i.e., the unconcealment of the true condition of all reality) may manifest, making fully patent the total plenitude and perfection of Dzogchen *qua* Base—which is what the *Divine Comedy* represents as passing through the hole at the bottom of Hell. As I have noted in the above mentioned works, henceforth the process will consist in the repeated manifestation of Dzogchen *qua* Path, which will go along with the spontaneous liberation of basic human delusion that progressively neutralizes the latter and which ideally concludes with the establishment of Dzogchen *qua* Fruit.¹⁷

When the phenomenon of being and all that develops interdependently with it reaches the point at which the naked experience of the being of the human individual has become too unpleasant to bear, bad faith (Sartre’s [1943/1980] term for self-deceit) becomes necessary for he or she to lead a smoother life and for putting the lid on those of his or her reactions which would catalyze the positive feedback loop resulting in the runaway of the degree of being, the velocity of time and so on, to the threshold at which *samsara*’s loops would have the possibility of spontaneously deactivating themselves. In fact, we have seen that being unable to elude the fact that there is nothing substantial to grasp, being unable to elude the naked experience of the being of the human individual which is anguish, or being unable to elude the naked experience of becoming the entity that others perceive as our self which Sartre [1943/1980] inaccurately called shame (Capriles, [1977, 1986, 1997, work in progress 1]), would give rise to reactions which might activate the positive feedback loop at the root of the system’s runaway. It is in order to prevent this

and make life bearable that bad faith must turn anguish into residual anxiety, and must try to turn into pride the naked experience of becoming the entity that others perceive as our self.

Moreover, at any given stage in the development of the cosmic cycle, the degree of effectiveness of bad faith will determine how high an individual will ascend in samsara. In fact, we manage to climb through the realms of samsara to the extent that we manage to elude the experience of our being and thus to dilute our conscious experience of being—that is, to the extent that we gain control over the mechanisms having the power to contain the reactions that would activate the positive feedback loop at the root of the system's runaway. Therefore, at any moment in spiritual and social degenerative evolution, the state with the least degree of being may be the “peak of experience”¹⁸ that constitutes the summit of samsara—and so the gradation of being may be roughly represented by the symbolism of the Vajracharya's hat, which places the realm of sensuality at the top, the realm of form in the middle, and the realm of formlessness at the bottom.¹⁹ This is why it is the “creation of a deficiency in the mechanisms that sustain birth and death” (i.e., in bad faith and whatever spiritual techniques we may apply in order to perfect bad faith), insofar as it permits the runaway of the system toward the threshold level, which allows the human individual to have the meditative experience of the aeon or kalpa. Thus both at the level of the species (at least once delusion has developed to a certain extent) and at the individual level, the degrees of being are directly related to the modification by means of bad faith (whether or not boosted by spiritual techniques) of the experience of being.

To sum up, the more vibratory rates increase and the more powerful and developed the phenomenon of being becomes, the higher the degree of being. Therefore, in terms of the development of the cosmic cycle, aeon or kalpa, the degree of being was lowest at the beginning of the cycle, when the phenomenon of being barely arose in human beings and, if the necessary conditions were present, it liberated itself spontaneously at some point—upon which a state of Communion beyond the delusory valuation of thought manifested. Then the phenomenon in question progressively develops through the cycle, and despite the above-noted fact that we develop bad faith/elusion in order to be able to bear the painful experience of being, it gradually intensifies, reaching its maximum degree at the very end of the cycle—after which it can crumble and a new cycle can begin.

On the other hand, in terms of the psychological state of an individual at any given point of the evolution of the cycle, the higher he or she climbs in samsara, the lesser the degree of his or her being, and the lower she or he descends

in samsara, the higher the degree of her or his being. However, contrarily to what happens with the development of being through the time cycle, in this case from a certain standpoint the degree of being may be said to be inversely proportional to the level of delusion, for the degree to which we manage to elude the bare experience of being corresponds to the degree of delusion in the third sense the terms *avidya* and *marigpa* have in the Dzogchen teachings: as the inability to realize delusion as such.²⁰ This is the main reason why going up in samsara may make it more difficult to surpass the manifestation of being, whereas going down and obtaining the maximum degree of being may help the phenomenon of being liberate itself spontaneously.

The above implies that also the Path may be explained in terms of a gradation of being: whether we explain it in terms of descending through Hell and, by continuing in the same direction, then ascending through Purgatory and later through the Heavens toward the Empyrean, or whether we explain it in terms of the meditative experience of the aeon or kalpa, we are speaking of a runaway of the phenomenon of being unleashed by a deficiency in the mechanisms of elusion or bad faith, which allows us to fully experience the conflict inherent in the basic contradiction at the root of samsara, providing us with a springboard from which to plunge into nirvana (i.e., into Dzogchen qua Path). It is because of this universal principle, that I have never structured my explanations of the Path in terms of a vertical progression from the states of greater conflict located at the bottom, up through ever less conflicting states, to perfect irreversible Awakening or Enlightenment at the summit. It is thus clear that the structure of Dante's *Divine Comedy* (according to which the Awakened condition is not reached directly by ascending, but by first descending) and the structure of the aeon or kalpa, are somehow analogous and most relevant in regard to human psycho-cosmology.

Ken Wilber's Inverted Gradation of Being and Inaccurate “Holoarchies” in General

Ken Wilber has produced a series of hierarchic classifications of consciousness and experience (which at some point he decided to call “holoarchies”), all of which have been structured contrarily to the *Divine Comedy*, for they represent each of the successive levels on the Path as lying above the preceding one and place the Awakened condition at the top, as though it were to be reached by a progressive process of ascent. In 1977, Wilber (1977/ 1993) posited the initial, single hierarchy of three basic levels, which I reviewed in “Beyond Mind” (Capriles, 2000b); these levels were: (1) “of the ego,” which is at the base of the hierarchy; (2) “existential,” located in the middle of the hierarchy; and (3) the “Mind,” at the top of the hierarchy. He defined these as follows (Wilber, 1993, p. 8):

Now the Ego Level is that band of consciousness that comprises our role, our picture of ourself, our self-image, with both its conscious and unconscious aspects, as well as the analytical and discriminatory nature of the intellect, of our “mind.” The second major level, the Existential Level, involves our total organism, our soma as well as our psyche, and thus comprises our basic sense of existence, of being, along with our cultural premises that in many ways mold this basic sensation of existence. Among other things, the Existential Level forms the sensory reference of our self-image: it’s what you *feel* when you mentally evoke the *symbol* of your self-image. It forms, in short, the persistent and irreducible source of separate I-awareness. The third basic level, here called Mind, is commonly termed mystical consciousness, and it entails the sensation that you are fundamentally one with the universe. *So where the Ego Level includes the mind, and the Existential Level includes both the mind and the body, the Level of Mind includes the mind and the body and the rest of the universe.*

Giving continuity to Maslow’s overestimation of “peak experiences” (Maslow, 1970),²¹ at the time of writing the above, Wilber seems to have viewed as the aim of all spiritual Paths the attainment of the “sensation of being fundamentally one with the universe”—a wording that applies quite precisely to the experience of the formless realms that, according to Buddhism, constitute the summit of *samsara*, in which there is a mental subject that knows an infinitude appearing as object and that identifies with this infinitude, but which does not apply to *nirvana*, where there is no apparently separate mental subject who may feel either one with anything, or different from anything. Moreover, individual liberation (Skt., *moksha* or *mukti*) was for him the “comprehension of the mental level” (Wilber, 1977; 2nd Ed. 1993, p. 9)—which, if taken literally, would consist in the intellectual understanding of the level wherein one “has the sensation” of cosmic oneness.

In fact, levels belong to what Buddhism calls “conventional truth,” the Sanskrit term for which has the etymological meaning of “deluded [pseudo] truth,” and are proper of the Ferris wheel-like gloomy-go-round called *samsara*: the vicious circle of experience that involves climbing to higher states and then falling into lower, gloomier ones, and which features a summit (the “highest” of the four formless absorptions and corresponding realms, in which there is neither perception nor absence of perception, and which is characterized by the experience of cosmic unity²²) and a bottom (consisting in the lowest realm of the sphere of sensuality [Skt. *kama loka* or *kamadhatu*], which is the bottom-most level of the *naraka* or purgatories [non-eternal hells]:

the *avichi naraka* or “uninterrupted purgatory,” in which the experience of separation and division reaches its ceiling). On the other hand, according to the higher Buddhist teachings, *nirvana* is the condition of absolute equality in which there is no “I” that may ascend or descend, and which is attained by Seeing through the conditioned experience of *samsara* into the unconditioned primordial reality that was concealed by that conditioned experience. That which is specifically Dzogchen—though *Ch’an* and *Zen* Buddhism involves a roughly analogous explanation—is the explicit consideration of the base-of-all or *kunzhi* wherein neither *nirvana* nor *samsara* are active as a third possibility besides *samsara* and *nirvana*.²³

With the passing of time, the number of levels in Wilber’s hierarchic classifications of consciousness and experience multiplied, but for a long time he did not discriminate among the different types of hierarchy. By 1982 (Wilber, 1982), the levels were: (1) the physical; (2) the biological; (3) the mental (no longer intended to correspond to Awakening, for now the term indicates the “level of ego, logic and thought”); (4) the subtle (of non-Jungian archetypes, transindividual, intuitive); (5) the causal (formless brilliancy or luminosity, perfect transcendence), and (6) the absolute (consciousness as such, which would be the source of all other levels). Note that the description of the “causal level” Wilber offers us in this book perfectly responds to the state known as base-of-all or *kunzhi* (*kun gzhi*), wherein neither *samsara* nor *nirvana* are active, as manifest when one cozily remains in the experience of the inner luminosity of *dang* (*gdangs*) energy known as *tingsel* (*gting gsal*)²⁴ without reGnizing this luminosity (a reGnition that would turn it into an instance of the *dharmakaya*),²⁵ or in *nirvikalpa* experiences of the *samten bardo*²⁶ (*bsam gtan bar do*) or *bardo* of meditative absorption—and may also correspond to the vaguely defined state of *turiya-ananda* of the *Mandukya* and *Taittiriya Upanishads*. Finally, Wilber tells us that the sixth and last is, more than a level, the true condition of all levels: it is the unconditioned foundation that is hidden by the countless conditioning mental constructions and that the Dzogchen teachings refer to as Dzogchen *qua* Base, but which Wilber somehow turned into the Summit of his hierarchy of spiritual states.²⁷

So far as I know, Wilber has not ceased offering his readers hierarchical schemas (which lately he has preferred to call “holoarchical”).²⁸ By 1996 (Wilber, 1996), the levels were organized in different systems: one involving three groups of levels described by Ervin Laszlo (Laszlo, 1987, p. 55); two involving five levels each; another one involving nine “basic structures of consciousness;” a twofold one involving twelve levels (“the great holoarchy in Plotinus and Aurobindo”); and the one involving four series of thirteen levels each that Wilber calls “the four quadrants.”²⁹ Among

these systems, the first one, involving three groups of levels, responds to the need to distinguish degrees of complexity in reality so that science and technology will not trample on the dignity of human existents and will not instrumentally manipulate the whole of reality (which I have acknowledged in various works [Capriles & Hocevar, 1991, 1992; Capriles, 1994, work in progress 2]).³⁰ However, the one that posits nine “basic structures of consciousness” or “fulcra,” plus a tenth category that, according to Wilber, “is not so much a fulcrum or separate level, but is rather the very Essence of all levels, of all states, of all conditions” (and which as such also seems to correspond to Dzogchen *qua* Base but which is presented as Dzogchen *qua* Summit³¹), is another hierarchical (“holoarchival”) division of states of consciousness of the type criticized above, as well as in other of my works (Capriles, 1999, 2000a, 2000b).

In fact, though each of Wilber’s subsequent conceptions was intended to introduce an improvement in regard to the immediately preceding one, two basic inaccuracies of Wilber’s (1977) hierarchy of states of consciousness persisted in all following ones—and, furthermore, some of these introduced new inaccuracies as well (one of these being the idea expressed in Wilber [1996] that truly nondual traditions view Awakening as involving the subject-object duality, which will be discussed toward the end of this section). The two inaccuracies dating from 1977 that persisted in posterior hierarchies (which then Wilber decided to call “holoarchies”) laid in:

(1) Wilber’s failure to discriminate between: (a) samsaric transpersonal conditions (and in particular the formless absorptions and the corresponding realms, which will be considered in a note below), in which bondage is far subtler and hence far more difficult to undo than in samsaric personal conditions; (b) the transpersonal condition of the neutral base-of-all, in which, as we have seen, neither *samsara* nor *nirvana* are active, and in which the precious human birth is squandered, and (c) the transpersonal conditions of *nirvana* in which true release and true sanity lie.

(2) His insistence on continuing to posit hierarchical (“holoarchival”) classifications of *samsara* and *nirvana* which—like the classifications featured in the *Upanishads*—present Awakening or Enlightenment as being attained by ascending through progressive levels until a plane lying above all other planes, and his insistence on presenting these classifications as though they applied to all Paths—despite the fact that the latest versions Wilber produced of these classifications frontally contradict the sequences of realization posited in all Buddhist Paths. Furthermore, Wilber overlooks the fact that, in a phenomenological, ontological sense,³² the Path to Awakening consists in Seeing through the multiple layers of conditioned experiences that make up *samsara*, into the unconditioned Dzogchen *qua* Base which

those experiences conceal—so as to discover the unconditioned condition of absolute equality in which there can be no hierarchy or holoarchy whatsoever, and thus put an end to the delusory valuation of levels and to the illusion of an “I” that may ascend or descend.³³ Therefore, the inadvertent reader may get the impression that the Path in no sense involves the undoing of the conditionings produced by the process of ontogeny, and is likely to conclude that Awakening is attained by building successive states (which, being built, would be conditioned), above the preceding ones.

Among the “fulcra” Wilber posited in 1996, the sixth (the centaur or existential level) is defined as involving: (a) the integration of mind and body; (b) the authenticity of not eluding basic anguish (i.e., not eluding that which, according to Heidegger [1996], is inherent in being-for-death, and which, according to Sartre [1943/1980], is inherent to the being of the human individual), and (c) what Jean Gebser (1986) called “aperspectival freedom,” deriving from the fact that one no longer privileges any point of view over the plethora of other viewpoints at one’s disposal. Then the transpersonal levels begin: in the seventh fulcrum, which Wilber calls “psychic level,” the sensation of a separate identity dissolves momentarily (e.g., when, in the contemplation of nature, the illusion of someone separate from nature who is perceiving it disappears). In the eighth, which he refers to as the “subtle level,” the individual contacts non-ordinary strata of perception and subtle non-Jungian archetypes. Finally, Wilber characterizes the ninth fulcrum as nondual—which implies that it must be beyond the cause-effect relation, the subject-object duality and so on—and yet he paradoxically refers to it as the “causal level.”

In *none* of the genuine Paths with which I am familiar, does the practitioner have to go through all the fulcra posited by Wilber, and to do so precisely in the order he establishes. The first level of realization may in fact be preceded by the relative authenticity Wilber associates to the sixth fulcrum, which lies in developing *to some degree* a capacity not to elude the experiences Kierkegaard (1968, 1970) referred to as despair, *Angst*, “fear and trembling,” and so forth, or the experience of *Angst* as manifest in what Heidegger (1996) called “being toward the end,” or what Sartre (1943/1980) called *angoise*, *nausée* and so on—and which may be somehow related to the stage of paranoia posited by David Cooper (1971). However, the bare experience of the being of the human individual that consists in basic anguish, does *not* in any sense involve the integration of mind and body which, according to Wilber, is also inherent in the sixth fulcrum; on the contrary, this experience arises when the contradiction inherent in the delusion called *avidya* or marigpa initially becomes evident and

hence turns into conflict—and one of the aspects of the contradiction that turns into conflict is precisely the illusory mind-body schism. Furthermore, as will be seen below, the most advanced practices of Dzogchen, which are to be applied when there is already a great degree of body-mind integration, in a stage that is subsequent to the realization of voidness, to the realization of absolute truth and to the whole of the stages posited by Wilber (but which comprehends the manifestation of visions of rölpa energy, which are somehow like those Wilber associated to the eighth fulcrum), are based in experiencing in its bareness the anguish and distress inherent in the being of the human individual. To conclude, we have seen that according to Wilber the sixth fulcrum, which in his system is supposed to precede the realization of voidness, involves what Jean Gebser called “aperspectival freedom,” deriving from the fact that one no longer privileges any point of view over the plethora of other viewpoints at one’s disposal—a result that in all higher Buddhist Paths results from the realization of voidness beyond the subject-duality in the state of absolute truth and that, as I have shown in Capriles (2005), *can only derive from this realization* (and which, therefore, it cannot be prior to it).³⁴

Moreover, though Wilber has studied Dzogchen,³⁵ he is positing a progression of realization beginning at the seventh fulcrum that he wrongly takes for the *nirmanakaya* (but which I have been unable to identify as corresponding to any of the levels of realization that obtain in the genuine Paths with which I am familiar), followed by the eighth fulcrum that he mistakenly identifies with the *sambhogakaya* (but which I have been unable to identify as any of the levels of realization that obtain in the genuine Paths with which I am familiar), and concluding at the ninth fulcrum, which he confuses with the *dharmakaya* (but which I have been unable to identify as any of the levels of realization that obtain in the genuine Paths with which I am familiar). In so doing, not only does he mistake for the three kayas experiences that are not these kayas, but he also posits a sequence of the kayas opposite to the one that is characteristic of the Dzogchen teachings and in particular to that of the *Upadeshavarga* or Menngagde series of teachings—which begins with realization of the *dharmakaya*, continues with realization of the *sambhogakaya* and concludes with realization of the *nirmanakaya*.³⁶

A sequence of realization beginning with the *nirmanakaya*, continuing with the *sambhogakaya*, then featuring the *dharmakaya*, and concluding with the *swabhavikaya* that consists in the indivisibility of the first three kayas, is posited in the Buddhist Tantras³⁷ of the Path of Transformation. As we have seen, this inversion of the sequence of realization of the kayas proper of Dzogchen *Atiyoga*, the “universal ancestor of all vehicles,”³⁸ is related

to the fact that, though in both systems the names of the kayas are the same, what the names indicate is not the same—which is evidenced by the fact that, as I have noted elsewhere (Capriles, 2000a, 2003, 2004), the final realization of the Inner Tantras of the Path of Transformation, which these Tantras call *swabhavikaya* and view as the fourth and last *kaya* to be attained, corresponds to the stage of Direct Introduction to Dzogchen that is the precondition of genuine Dzogchen practice and that, in the *Upadeshavarga* series of teachings, is prior both to the practice of Tekchö (*khregs chod*) that must establish the *dharmakaya* and to the subsequent practice of Thögel (*thod rgal*) that must establish the *sambhogakaya* and finally result in the *nirmanakaya*. Therefore, the levels of realization that Dzogchen *Ati* calls *sambhogakaya* and *nirmanakaya* go far beyond the final level of realization of the inner Tantras of the Path of transformation and by no means can be attained through the methods of these Tantras.

In fact, in the Menngagde series of Dzogchen *Ati*, but not so in the Inner Tantras of the *Vajrayana*, the *dharmakaya* is the correct apprehension of the dang (*gdangs*) form of manifestation of energy in the practice of Tekchö; the *sambhogakaya* is the correct apprehension of the rölpa (*rol pa*) form of manifestation of energy in the practice of Thögel; and finally the *nirmanakaya* is the correct apprehension of the tsel (*rtsal*) form of manifestation of energy that obtains as the result of carrying the practice of Thögel to a given threshold: this is why the Dzogchen teachings place so much emphasis on these forms of manifestation of energy, which are ignored in the Anuttarayogatantras of the Sarmapa and in the Nyingma Tantras of the Path of Transformation, and in all lower vehicles as well.³⁹

In fact, in Tekchö the practitioner works mainly with the *katak* (*ka dag*) aspect of the Base, which is voidness, and with the dang form of manifestation of energy, which constitutes all thoughts—and it is when the true condition of the dang energy is reGnized, that the *dharmakaya* or first aspect of Awakening manifests. In Thögel the practitioner works mainly with the lhundrub (*lhun grub*) or “spontaneous perfection” aspect of the Base, which comprehends the absolutely uncontrived and unrestrained spontaneity of our Gnitiveness (and in particular the positive feedback loops that make up the Thanatos), and with the rölpa (*rol pa*) form of manifestation of energy, which gives rise to the immaterial visions that arise during the practice of Thögel—and it is when the true condition of the rölpa energy is reGnized, upon which the mental subject that seemed to be perceiving it disappears, that the *sambhogakaya* manifests. Finally, the *nirmanakaya* only manifests in a stable manner once integration with the visions of rölpa energy in the practice of Thögel has neutralized the tendency to experience phenomena as external objects, and so we no longer experi-

ence ourselves as separate from the phenomena of the “material” world constituted by tsel (*rtsal*) energy: the rölpa and tsel forms of manifestation of energy have fused and there is no longer anything that may interrupt the condition of indivisibly or jerme (*dbyer med*) that constitutes the *nirmanakaya* (cf. Capriles [2003] or, for a more in depth explanation, Capriles [work in progress 2]).

The fact that the sequence of realization of the kayas on the Path of transformation coincides with the one Wilber seems to posit in the 1996 work we are considering does *not* at all mean the “holoarchy” we are considering coincides with the sequence of realization on the Path in question. To begin with, in the 1996 work that we have been considering, Wilber seemingly intended to equate the *nirmanakaya* with what he called “psychic level,” but his description of this level was ambiguous enough as to apply equally to transpersonal samsaric states, to neither-samsaric-nor-nirvanic transpersonal states, and to some nirvanic states—though apparently *not* so to the *nirmanakaya* as conceived by any Buddhist system (Wilber, 1996, p. 202):

... a person might temporarily dissolve the separate-self sense⁴⁰ (the ego or centaur) and find an identity with the entire gross or sensorimotor world—so-called *nature mysticism*. You’re on a nice nature walk, relaxed and expansive in your awareness, and wham!—suddenly there is no looker, just the mountain—and you are the mountain. You are not in here looking at the mountain out there. There is just the mountain, and it seems to see itself, or you seem to be seeing it from within. The mountain is closer to you than you own skin.

If we *identify with* the world *qua* totality, the subject-object duality is still present, for *it is the mental subject that identifies with the object qua totality*—and in such a case what has taken place is an experience of the formless realms.⁴¹ However, after speaking of identification, Wilber uses the expression *disappearance of the observer*, which implies that there is no longer a mental subject that may identify with this or that—in which case we would not be speaking of the formless realms, which like all samsaric conditions involves the subject-object duality. Neither in *nirvana*, nor in the neutral condition of the base-of-all or kunzhi lungmaten (*kun gzhi lung ma bstan*) wherein neither *samsara* nor *nirvana* are active, is there a mental subject or an observer; however, since in individuals who are not intensively training in a genuine Path of Awakening it is hardly possible that an initial manifestation of *nirvana* may take place fortuitously while “taking a walk through nature, relaxed and open,” we can be certain that if the observer disappears in such circumstances, what has manifested is an instance of the neutral condition of the base-of-all. In par-

ticular, what the Inner Tantras of the Path of Transformation refer to as the *nirmanakaya* does not manifest in the fortuitous manner in which the occurrence described by Wilber is supposed to come about, nor does it consist in a particular type of apprehension of the phenomena of the natural world.

Then comes the eighth fulcrum, which Wilber calls the “subtle level,” in which he asserts that we contact non-ordinary strata of perception and subtle non-Jungian archetypes. It must be remarked that *per se* the manifestation of non-ordinary strata of perception and subtle non-Jungian archetypes does not correspond to any level of realization, for such experiences may take place in psychosis or upon the ingestion of a psychedelic drug. Realization does not at all depend on *what is it* that manifests, but on *how* does it manifest: genuine manifestations of Dzogchen *qua* Path must necessarily involve the reGnition of the spontaneous awareness in which, as in a mirror, experiences manifest, and therefore they must give rise to the spontaneous liberation of conceptuality and hence of dualism; in the particular case of visions of rölpa energy, upon the spontaneous liberation of conceptuality the vision remains, but there is no longer the illusion that it is an object appearing to a subject, or that it is manifesting in an external dimension: it is this that is referred to as the *sambhogakaya*. If visions manifest but there is no such reGnition and hence no spontaneous liberation of conceptuality, what has manifested is a vulgar illusory experience or nyam (*nyams*) of clarity (which initially manifests in the neutral condition of the base-of-all, but immediately, upon being recognized, manifests as a samsaric experience of the realm of form [*rupadhatu* or *rupa loka*]).

Furthermore, Wilber associates this fulcrum, in which he thinks the *sambhogakaya* is realized, with the dread of voidness I have called *panic*, which cannot manifest in the stage of the Path in which the *sambhogakaya* is realized (which in the *Upadeshavarga* series of Dzogchen teachings corresponds to the practices of Thögel and the Yangthik [*yang thig*]). Only human beings of lower capacities go through the experience of *panic*, and they go through it in *earlier* stages of the Path, *before* the initial realizations of voidness and of absolute truth, rather than in a stage that is far posterior to these realizations and that immediately precedes the consolidation of unsurpassable, complete Awakening. Second *dharmachakra* and *Madhyamika* literature tells us that the dread of voidness that Wilber associates to this fulcrum is proper of the shravakas, and that it is this fear that distinguishes them from beings of Mahayana capacities—the reason why Shakyamuni did not transmit the *Prajñāparamita Sūtras* to his direct disciples, but entrusted them to the king of the nagas for him to bestow them on the prophesized Nagarjuna, being that his direct disciples were shravakas and hence these teachings would have

inspired *panic* in them, which could have scared them away from the *dharma*. The second of the five paths of the gradual *Sutrayana* is that of preparation [Skt., *prayoga marga*; Tib., *sbyor ba'i lam*], which in the Mahayana is so called because the practitioner is preparing for the transition to the first supramundane path, which is the path of Seeing [Skt., *darshana marga*; Tib., *mtshong lam*], in which voidness is directly realized beyond the duality of subject and object, and the absolute truth of the Mahayana is disclosed;⁴² in this vehicle, the third of the four levels of the path of preparation is the one called “forbearance of the unborn,” for in it practitioners become increasingly familiar with the concept and the incipient intuitions of emptiness that previously inspired terror in them, and finally overcome fear of emptiness; since terror of emptiness can no longer manifest even in the last level of the path of preparation, which is previous to the direct realization of voidness beyond the duality of subject and object that discloses the absolute truth of Mahayana, far less can it manifest in the stage in which the *sambhogakaya* is realized in the practice of Dzogchen, which is incomparably more advanced. Furthermore, the Mahamudra tradition asserts that upon listening to teachings concerning emptiness for the first time, beings of higher capacities experience a great joy that may even make all their hair go on end; beings of middle capacities have no extreme reactions, and beings of lower capacities experience terror. The same may happen when the bioenergetic volume increases for the first time to a level in which the ensuing panoramification of the focus of conscious awareness and permeabilization of the limits of this focus causes us to glimpse the voidness of all entities: beings of higher capacities may experience great joy, whereas those of lower capacities may experience dread—this being the reason why Lama Anagarika Govinda (1973) wrote that upon the increase of the bioenergetic volume [Skt., *kundalini*; Tib., *thig le*] beings who are not rightly prepared could undergo experiences of terror. It is true that, for example, when the practice of Tekchö, in which the *dharmakaya* manifests again and again, is boosted by the practice of Chö (*gcod*), dread can be experienced; however, this dread, rather than being *panic*, is terror before what may be believed to cause injury and death.

We have seen that Wilber related the bare experience of the being of the human individual in *Angst*, *angoise* and so on, to the stage he referred to as the sixth fulcrum. However, the being of the human individual continues to manifest in post-Contemplation so long as Dzogchen *qua* Fruit—irreversible Buddhahood—has not been attained, and the function of the most advanced practices of the *Upadeshavarga* series of Dzogchen teachings, such as those of Thögel and the Yangthik, which are catalyzed by the wrathful mandalas (cf. Capriles [1989, 2000a, 2000b, 2003,

work in progress 1, work in progress 2]) and which are the ones in which the visions Wilber associated to the eighth fulcrum arise, have the function of making us experience in its bareness the anguish inherent in the being of the human individual each and every time this mode of being manifests, so that the associated feeling may be employed as an alarm reminding us to apply the pit instructions—or, if we are advanced enough, so that delusion liberates itself spontaneously upon arising without there being need for applying any instructions (it must be stressed once more that the basic experience of the anguish inherent in the being of the human individual has nothing to do with what I call *panic*, which is what Wilber associates to the manifestation of the visions of rölpa energy).⁴³ Though at this stage there is a very high degree of mind-body integration like the one Wilber associates to his sixth fulcrum, unlike the latter this phase is not previous to the realization of voidness or of absolute truth, but is far beyond this realization—for, as noted above, it is the stage immediately preceding the transition from the Path to the Fruit of irreversible, unwavering Buddhahood (which in Dzogchen involves the absolute integration of awareness with the body and the whole of “physical” reality, and which may result in special modes of death, or even in deathlessness⁴⁴).

According to Wilber, the ninth fulcrum, which he posits as the last, nondual level (for, as we have seen, the tenth “is not so much a fulcrum or separate level, but is rather the very Essence of all levels, of all states, of all conditions”), is the one in which what Mahayana Buddhism calls “voidness” or “emptiness” (Skt., *shunyata*; Tib., *stong pa nyid*; Chinese, *k'ung*; Japanese, *ku*) is realized. In order to place this fulcrum in perspective, we must begin by distinguishing voidness *qua* *nyam* (*nyams*) or illusory experience, from voidness as a most essential aspect of the absolute truth of the Mahayana: the Dzogchen teachings compare the former (which may consist in any experience of nonconceptuality, of lack of characteristics and so on, or in the conceptual realization that entities do not exist in the way in which they appear to exist⁴⁵) to a reflection in the mirror that represents the primordial awareness inherent in Dzogchen *qua* Base, and explain the latter (which is better referred to as “freedom from all conceptual extremes in the condition of *nirvana*” [cf. Capriles, 2004, 2005]) as the realization of the primordial awareness represented as the mirror, in a gnosis free from the illusory subject-object duality that makes patent the fact that all phenomena are empty in the sense of lacking self-existence or substance (Skt., *swabhava shunyata*; Tib., *nang stong*).⁴⁶ In Dzogchen practice, the nondual realization which, being an instance of *nirvana* (and as such of what the Mahayana calls absolute truth), emphasizes voidness over anything else, is the unveiling of Dzogchen *qua* Base in the Tekchö practice of the Dzogchen Menngagde or

Upadeshavarga (which has rough equivalents in other series of teachings): this realization is nondual insofar as it involves the instant dissolution, like feathers entering fire, of the subject-object duality⁴⁷—and yet it privileges voidness insofar as the essence aspect of the Base, which is voidness, is most prominent in it (in all subsequent levels of realization voidness is evident as well, but is not the most outstanding aspect). However, voidness *qua* illusory experience can be used for realizing the voidness aspect of absolute truth, or for obtaining the realization of the condition of Dzogchen in which its essence or *ngowo* aspect, which is voidness, is most prominent: for this to occur, the awareness in which voidness *qua* illusory experience manifests and which is compared to a mirror must be reGnized so that the all-liberating nondual gnosis manifests—upon which delusorily valued thoughts liberate themselves instantaneously, and hence the subject-object duality resulting from the delusory valuation of the super-subtle thought-structure the teachings call the “threefold thought-structure” [Tib., *'khor gsum*] instantly dissolves. Given Wilber’s definitions, one wonders how his ninth fulcrum is different from the “psychic level,” for if, as he seems to believe, the latter were really an instance of *nirvana* involving the dissolution of the observer before a natural phenomenon, it would necessarily involve the realization of voidness⁴⁸ beyond the subject-object duality, and hence it should be a realization of the voidness aspect of the absolute truth of the Mahayana.

According to Wilber, the ninth fulcrum corresponds to Enlightenment (i.e., to what I call Awakening); however, Wilber posits two different types of Enlightenment, which in his views are the respective Fruits of two different traditions (Wilber, 1996, pp. 236-237⁴⁹):

There are two rather different schools about this “Enlightened” state, corresponding to the two rather different meanings of “Emptiness” that we discussed.

The first takes as its paradigm the causal or unmanifest state of absorption (*nirvikalpa*, *nirodh*). That is a very distinct, very discrete, very identifiable state. And so if you equate Enlightenment with that state of cessation, then you can very distinctly say whether a person is “fully Enlightened” or not.

Generally, as in the Theravadin Buddhist tradition and in the Samkhya yogic schools, whenever you enter this state of unmanifest absorption, it burns certain lingering afflictions and sources of ignorance. Each time you fully enter this state, more of these afflictions are burned away. And after a certain number and type of these entrances—often four—you have burned away everything there is to burn, and so you can enter this state at will, and remain there permanently. You can enter *nirvana*

permanently, and *samsara* ceases to arise in your case. The entire world of Form ceases to arise.

But the Nondual traditions do not have that as their goal. They will often use that state, and often master it. But more important, these schools—such as Vedanta Hinduism and Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism—are more interested in pointing out the Nondual state of Suchness, which is not a discrete state of awareness but the ground or empty condition of *all states*. So they are not so much interested in finding an Emptiness divorced from the world of Form (or *samsara*), but rather an Emptiness that embraces all Form even as Form continues to arise. For them, *nirvana* and *samsara*, Emptiness and Form, are not two...

...dualisms—between subject and object, inside and outside, Left and Right—will still arise, and are *supposed* to arise. Those dualities are the very mechanisms of manifestation. Spirit—the pure immediate Suchness of reality—manifests as a subject and an object, and in both singular and plural forms—in other words, Spirit manifests as all four quadrants. And we aren’t supposed to simply evaporate those quadrants—they are the radiant glory of Spirit’s manifestation.

But we are supposed to see through them to their Source, their Suchness. And a quick glimpse won’t do it. This One Taste has to permeate all levels, all quadrants, all manifestation.

Thus according to Wilber there are two kinds of traditions: (1) ones which he defines as dualistic and which regard Awakening as a state of *nirodha* or cessation free from the subject-object duality, and (2) ones which he categorizes as nondualistic and which seek a supposedly Awake condition in which dualism continues to arise, but in which the dualistic experience in question seems to be somehow impregnated by the single taste of the essence of all reality. Though Wilber lists Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism (the latter including the Tantras of the Path of Transformation and the Tantras of the Path of spontaneous liberation of Dzogchen *Atiyoga*) among the nondual traditions, in terms of the nondualistic Buddhist systems, which are the *Madhyamaka* School of philosophy of the Mahayana, the Tantras of the Path of transformation and the Tantras of the Path of spontaneous liberation, none of the two alternatives Wilber posited may be regarded as genuine Awakening, for all such systems make it clear that the nirvanic realization of the nondual condition while on the Path and the consolidation of the nirvanic nondual condition as the Fruit is *not* a condition of *nirodha* or cessation, and *yet it involves the dissolution of the subject-object duality*. In fact, since the subject-

object duality results from the reification of the supersubtle thought structure known as the “threefold thought-structure,”⁵⁰ and since subject and object are mutually relative, absolute truth (which by definition cannot be relative) cannot be the object of any mind or conventional attention, but has to manifest in the patency of a primordial gnosis (Skt., *jñāna*; Tib., *ye shes*) beyond the subject-object duality. We read in the *Lankavatārasūtra*, of the Third Promulgation (Suzuki, 1932/1956, p. 64):⁵¹

...Mahamati, that which is characterized as being produced by the threefold thought-structure (Tib., *’khor gsum*) [consisting in subject, object and their interaction] is consciousness, whereas that characterized as the essential nature that is not so produced is primordial gnosis. Then again, Mahamati, that which is characterized as not to be attained is primordial gnosis, since in each of us sublime primordial gnosis does not emerge as a perceptual object of realization, but is manifest [nondually] in the manner of the moon’s reflection in water, [which is not at a distance from the water in which it is reflected].

The fact that the gradual Mahayana Path, as understood by the founders of the *Madhyamaka* School, assert that realization must involve the dissolution of the subject-object duality, is proven by verse XIV.25 of the *Chatuhishatakasha śrākarika* by Aryadeva’s (Capriles, 2005; Napper, 2003):⁵² “The seed of cyclic existence (*samsara*) is a consciousness; objects are its sphere of activity.”⁵³

In its turn, verse IX.2 of Shantideva’s *Bodhicaryāvatāra* expresses the *Prasangika* interpretation of *Madhyamaka* in this regard (Capriles, 2005):

The relative and the absolute
are what is known as the two truths;
the absolute is not an object of
knowledge to the mind,
for the mind [and all of its objects are what is]
considered as the ‘relative’.

In fact, according to the original *Madhyamaka Prasangika* School, in the gradual Path of the Mahayana, the absolute truth, both as it manifests on the Path and as it manifests as the Fruit, consists in a realization, utterly beyond the subject-object duality, of the true nature of all phenomena (Skt., *dharmata*; Tib., *chos nyid*), in which the voidness (Skt., *śhunyata*; Tib., *stong pa nyid*) of those phenomena becomes patent. Dudjom Rinpoche wrote (Dudjom Rinpoche, J. Y. D., 1991, vol. I, p. 206):⁵⁴

During Contemplative absorption, when balanced in the expanse of [all] phenomena without conditions to be clarified or established, both modes of *Madhyamaka* (the Outer that includes *Prasangika*

and *Swatantrika* and the Inner that includes *Mahamadhyamaka*) make no distinction regarding the cessation of all elaborate signs of the subject-object dichotomy therein.

And also (*ibidem*, vol. I, p. 215):⁵⁵

Therefore, the inconceivable primordial gnosis that is the [ultimate] Truth is a great purity of natural expression, transcending the symbolic range of the subject-object dichotomy.

Further evidence that according to *Madhyamika* philosophy the realizations of the Mahayana involve the dissolution of the subject-object duality is provided in the exhaustive discussion of this subject in two recent works of mine (Capriles, 2004, 2005). At any rate, in the gradual Mahayana the realization of absolute truth that, as the *Madhyamaka* school emphasizes, is beyond the subject-object duality, initially manifests upon the transition to the third path (Skt., *marga*; Tib., *lam*), called the “path of Seeing” (Skt., *darshana marga*; Tib., *mtshong lam*) and the corresponding first level (Skt., *bhumi*; Tib., *sa*), called the “joyous level” (Skt., *pramudita bhumi*; Tib., *rab tu dga’ ba sa*), and henceforth continues to manifest in the Contemplation state throughout the fourth path, which is called “path of Contemplation” (Skt., *bhavana marga*; Tib., *sgom lam* or *sgom pa’i lam*) and which comprehends levels two through ten. However, in these levels it is always followed by the re-installation of samsaric delusion and therefore of the subject-object, giving rise to what is known as a “post-Contemplation state”—though in it the delusion in question manifests with lesser strength, for there is some awareness of the apparitional character of all phenomena. This awareness of the apparitional character of phenomena results from the filtering down into the dualistic post-Contemplation condition, of the realization of the true nature of all phenomena by a nondual awareness while in the Contemplation state, which somehow impregnates the dualistic post-Contemplation state with the “taste” of the single essence of reality. Therefore, this “filtering down” can only derive from the manifestation, over and over again, of the Contemplation state in which there is no subject-object duality, and by no means could it result from pointing out the state of “nondual Suchness” from the state in which this “nondual Suchness” totally concealed by the subject-object duality and without achieving the dissolution of this duality: so long as there is a frog at the bottom of a deep well, no matter how much you point to him the limitless sky, he will continue to take it for a small luminous blue circle surrounded by dark walls. Finally, upon attainment of the fifth path, which is the path of no-more-learning (Skt., *ashaikshamarga*; Tib., *mi slob pa’i lam*), corresponding to the

eleventh level (called “all-pervading light:” Skt., *saman-taprabha bhumi*; Tib., *kun tu 'od sa*), the state of absolute truth beyond the subject-object duality consolidates in such a way that the delusive subject-object duality, and therefore a post-Contemplation state, never manifests again: there is no frog to whom the limitless, nondual sky may be concealed, and no well to conceal it from him—and hence there is unrestricted freedom. (Even the Gelugpa school of Tibetan Buddhism and the *Madhyamaka-Prasangika* philosophical school, which do not admit that the dualistic consciousness that manifests in *samsara* arises in a nondual awareness as nondual awareness [of] consciousness of object, do admit that in the Fruit consisting in Buddhahood, rather than a dualistic consciousness, what are at work are nondual gnoses involving neither a mental subject nor an object.⁵⁶) In fact, Dudjom Rinpoche writes concerning Shakyamuni’s Awakening (*ibidem*, vol. I, p. 421):⁵⁷

As he became a perfectly realized Buddha, the whole earth trembled and all the psychophysical bases *which were to be purified of the subject-object dichotomy* awakened to the *primordial gnosis free of duality*, in the impeccable mansion of the *dharmakaya*, which is the “middle way.”

The same applies to the Path of transformation of the *Vajrayana*, which in the ancient or Nyingmapa tradition consists of the *Mahayogatantra* and the *Anuyogatantra*, and in the new tradition consists in the *Anuttarayogatantra*. On the Path, a Contemplation state in which the illusory subject-object duality completely dissolves, alternates with a post-Contemplation state in which duality manifests anew, but delusion has been mitigated insofar as there is some awareness of the apparitional character of phenomena. In the Fruit, the subject-object duality arises no more, as delusion is utterly transcended. In the *Gyütrul Gyantso Gyü* (*sGyu 'phrul rgya mtsho rgyud*), a *Tantra of Mahayoga*, we read:⁵⁸

In the manner of a clear reflection in the ocean, without making an echo in the mind, the spontaneous awareness of direct realization *that has no object as referent...* concludes the view of study, reflection and Contemplation.

Finally, it is on the Path of spontaneous liberation of Dzogchen *Atiyoga* that the dissolution of the subject-object duality is most abrupt, and therefore most clear. As we have seen, in the *Upadeshavarga* series of teachings, the practice of Tekchö consists in the reGnition of the true condition of thoughts, which is the *dharmakaya*—upon which all types of thought instantly liberate themselves spontaneously, putting an end to the subject-object duality that results from the delusory valuation of the super-subtle thought structure

known as the “threefold thought-structure.” Dudjom Rinpoche writes (*ibidem*, vol. I, p. 309):⁵⁹

[The term] Dzogchen thus refers to the sublime truth that is to be realized through the primordial gnosis of individual spontaneous awareness, *free from the subject-object dichotomy*, and which is described under various names...

Since there are subject and object only while the delusory valuation of thought is active, so long as these manifest the subject grasps at the object—which is why these two are referred to as the grasper and the grasped. Dudjom Rinpoche writes (Dudjom Rinpoche, J. Y. D., 1979, p. 22):

The two deadly enemies which have bound us to *samsara* since beginningless time are the grasper and the grasped. Now that by the grace of the guru we have been introduced to the *dharmakaya* nature residing in ourselves, these two are burnt like feathers, leaving neither trace nor residue. Isn’t that delectable!

Once the practice of Tekchö has been developed to a certain degree, it is boosted by the practice of Thögel, which activates the dynamics of spontaneous liberation established in the practice of Tekchö *as soon as the dualism of subject and object begins to arise*, so that this dualism liberates itself spontaneously that very moment. In a record time, this burns away the propensity for the duality in question to manifest, and so what I am calling Dzogchen *qua* Fruit, in which the subject-object duality arises no more, can be consolidated more rapidly than on any other Path. Shri Simha’s *Chittalaka* reads (Dudjom Rinpoche, J. Y. D., 1991, vol. I, p. 357):⁶⁰

Having purified the five propensities of the subject-object dichotomy, and, by the expressive powers of the five primordial gnoses, having overpowered the level of bounteous array, the result gathering the five Awake families is obtained.

The Dzogchen teachings explain that the subject-object duality arises as the product of the delusory valuation of the super-subtle thought-structure called “threefold thought-structure,” in a nondual primordial awareness that in itself is nonthetic, nonpositional and nonreflexive. Furthermore, they compare dwelling in a state of *nirodha* or cessation to cutting one’s own neck—and, in fact, when the subject-object duality dissolves as *nirvana* manifests, a total freedom of awareness is at work, rather than there being sheer unawareness or an arresting of Gnitiveness such as the one called *nirodha* or cessation.

It is true, nonetheless, that the *Madhyamaka-Prasangika* philosophical school of the Mahayana, the

Tantras of the Path of transformation of the *Vajrayana* and the Tantras of the Path of spontaneous liberation of Dzogchen *Ati*, (1) point out the empty, nondual substrate of *all states*, and (2) posit the nonduality of *samsara* and *nirvana*. However, as shown above, (1) the empty, nondual substrate of *all states* can only be realized in a gnosis in which the subject-object duality does not manifest, for the nondual condition cannot become an object, and the dualism introduced by knowledge in terms of the subject-object duality conceals this nondual condition; furthermore, as we have seen, the traditions in question aim at the irreversible consolidation of this gnosis in which the subject-object duality does not manifest. In regard to (2), the point is that ordinary individuals are not aware that they are in *samsara* or that there is a *nirvana* that represents the solution to all of the drawbacks inherent in *samsara*; therefore if they are to have the possibility to surpass *samsara* together with the drawbacks inherent in it, they need to learn about these two conditions, so that they may aspire to *nirvana* and work towards it. However, this gives rise to a strong thirst for *nirvana* and aversion to *samsara* which, being instances of samsaric emotionality and dualism, sustain *samsara* and block the way to *nirvana*. It is as an antidote to this, and not because they fail to understand that *nirvana* is a specific condition that is devoid of the illusory subject-object duality, that the vehicles and schools in question teach the nonduality of *samsara* and *nirvana* at this later stage. It would be a most unfortunate mistake to interpret this teaching as meaning that we must conserve the subject-object duality that manifests only in *samsara*, and while remaining in *samsara* coming to believe that we have attained nonduality and that as such we have become better than those who are established in *nirvana* (which would be a really pathetic delusion, for *nirvana* is the only condition in which the nonduality of *samsara* and *nirvana* is truly realized).

In order to clarify the meaning of nonduality in truly nondual traditions and hence prevent confusions, it is mandatory to understand the meaning of nonduality in regard to the Base, Path, and Fruit. From the standpoint of the Base (the Outer Madhyamaka would say “from the standpoint of absolute truth”), *all* realms of experience are non-dual, for the Base is inherently free from duality or plurality. However, when the delusion called *avidya* or marigpa manifests in the second and third meaning the terms have in the Dzogchen teachings, the illusion of duality and plurality veils the basic nonduality and nonplurality of all phenomena, and thus there arises the need to tread the Path in order to surpass that illusion in the realization of the nondual, nonplural true condition of the Base. The essence of the Path is the unveiling of the nondual Base, which, insofar as the illusory subject-object duality is a most essential aspect of the veil that is to fall in this unveiling, involves the tem-

porary dissolution of this duality—and yet does not involve *nirodha* or cessation, for in the resulting condition primordial Awareness is utterly free and unhindered. Finally, the Fruit is the condition in which the illusory subject-object duality no longer arises to conceal the inherently nondual Base, and hence the patency of nonduality has been irreversible consolidated, and the perfect, unhindered freedom of Awareness can no longer be arrested. (As we have seen, also the neutral condition of the base-of-all is free from the illusion of duality; however, rather than being a manifestation of liberation or Awakening, the base-of-all is a condition of *nirodha* or cessation in which the perfect, unhindered freedom of Awareness is arrested, and in which it is impossible to apply the practices leading to Awakening—which is the reason why higher Buddhist teachings consider that dwelling in it represents a deviation from the true Path and an obstacle to Awakening.⁶¹)

The fact that Wilber believes that the subject-object duality continues to manifest in the fully Awake condition makes it possible for him to claim that the ninth fulcrum that he views as full, final Awakening involves what different Brahmanic traditions have called “the disinterested witness” or *sakshin*, which according to all of the traditions featuring the concept is separate and different from its object. The *Yoga darshana* of Patañjali, which in the traditional classification of the six orthodox Brahmanic darshanas or philosophical systems is coupled with Kapila’s *Samkhya darshana*, is universally acknowledged to be dualistic insofar as it affirms the existence of a plethora of souls, on the one hand—the male Purushas that are defined as being inherently different and separate from the objects of knowledge—and of the female *Prakriti*, which is identified with nature, on the other. In this system, the disinterested witness or *sakshin* is the freedom of *Purusha* from the hold of the naturally active *Prakriti*, to be achieved by developing a perfect aloofness before the latter’s movements—whereby *Purusha* regains its naturally passive condition.⁶² In the *Upanishads*, in the *Vedanta Sutra*, in Gaudapada’s *Mayavada* (which incorporated views of the *Yogachara* school of Buddhist philosophy) and in the *Advaita Vedanta* philosophy of Shankaracharya (which absorbed from the *Madhyamaka* school of Buddhist philosophy all it could absorb without coming to contradict the basic tenets of Brahmanism)—all of which, each in its own way and to its own degree, are supposed to be nondualistic—the disinterested witness or *sakshin* appears to roughly correspond to that which Kant called *pure apperception* and that according to the German philosopher is the condition of possibility of the *empirical apperception* that consists in awareness that one is perceiving—which thus may correspond to Sartre’s *Soi* or Self, provided that we understand the French author’s definition literally and take it to mean “nonthetic, nonposition-

al awareness that consciousness is aware of an object different from itself.” Bina Gupta defined as follows the conception of the *sakshin* in the allegedly nondual tradition beginning with the *Upanishads* (Gupta, 1947/1998):

1. The witness-consciousness, in spite of being the base of all knowledge, is different from the known object. It is the ultimate subject; it can never become an object of knowledge.
2. It is the element of pure awareness in all knowledge. It is an immutable, indivisible reality.
3. It shines with its own light; it is self-luminous.
4. It is different from the empirical individual [*jiva*], who knows and enjoys. In other words, it is different from the empirical individual trapped in the three-fold state of wakefulness, dreaming and dreamless sleep.

Thus in all traditions the *sakshin* is a consciousness that, in spite of being a subject and excluding all objects, does not get involved with these objects. Though the *Advaita Vedanta* philosophy of Shankaracharya proclaims itself to be nondual (*advaita*), it might be incurring in a dualism by positing a subject that it characterizes as “absolute” and which cannot and must not be eradicated, but which it defines as separate and different from its object—and that, as such, strictly speaking cannot be truly absolute, for it must be *relative* to the object. In fact, in the context of Idealism, Western philosophers raised the famous objection according to which an absolute could not be an *absolute of knowledge* insofar as the object and the subject that are the poles of knowledge are relative to each other,⁶³ and Dzogchen and Vajrayana Masters, the founders of the *Madhyamaka* school, and later on the *Madhyamika* Prasangikas raised the same objection many centuries earlier.

Of course, we cannot discard the possibility that the *sakshin* as conceived in the Brahmanic traditions that declare themselves to be nondual, be the nondual awareness inherent in Dzogchen *qua* Base, for both have in common that they cannot be turned into an object of knowledge, that they are the element of pure awareness in all knowledge, and that they are self-luminous. However, if this were so, these Brahmanic traditions would have erred in asserting it to be different from the known object, for as Longchenpa noted (Longchen Rabjam [Longchenpa], 1998, p. 84⁶⁴):

Although phenomena appear as they do to the mind, *they are not mind nor anything other than mind*. Given their illusory nature as clearly apparent yet unthinkable, void manifestations, moment by moment they are beyond description, imagination or expression. For this reason know that all phenomena that appear to the mind are unthinkable, ineffable and empty even as they manifest.

The apparent phenomena that manifest as the five kinds of sense objects [visual forms and so forth], and the phenomena of the universe that seem to appear in their own right, manifest to the mind and [in fact] are nothing other than [manifestations appearing to the mind]. Even though they appear to be something other [than the mind], like dreams and illusions they are by nature empty, and, [being unthinkable and ineffable, *they*] *have never been anything other [than mind] and have never been mind [either]*. In accordance with the eight traditional metaphors for illusoriness, an examination of phenomena as forms of emptiness, clearly apparent yet unthinkable, ineffable and void — whether considered to be composed of reducible or irreducible particles — determines their equalness in having no identity. One knows the basic space of unchanging emptiness through these natural manifestations of the nature of mind...”⁶⁵

What about the traditions that, according to Wilber, view Awakening as a condition of *nirodha* or cessation? Genuinely nondual Buddhist traditions, despite the fact that they all agree that Awakening is a condition free from the subject-object duality, do not explain it as involving *nirodha* or cessation, but as involving a total freedom of Awareness and an all-embracing Gnitiveness which are far removed from *nirodha*.⁶⁶ In terms of the Dzogchen teachings, those dualistic Brahmanic spiritual systems that understand *moksha* or release from the grip of illusion or *maya* and so on as *nirodha* or “cessation” (Wilber, 1996, p. 220), conceiving this state as the coming to rest of all Gnitive activity in a deep absorption, are positing as the aim of the path that which in truth is but an instance of the neutral condition of the base-of-all wherein neither *samsara* nor *nirvana* are active, and which is characterized by *ignorance* of the true condition of the Base and in some cases by the arrest of the natural motility of primordial awareness. As we have seen, the Dzogchen teachings compare dwelling in this condition with “cutting one’s own head,” for so long as we dwell in it we have no possibility of advancing on the Path, and we are wasting our precious human birth. Hence it would be absurd to posit (as Wilber does) the same stages or fulcra for the Paths that lead to nondual Awakening and those that lead to the cessation of *nirodha*: these two types of path are so radically different that their respective structures and functions can have hardly anything in common.

Though I have no experience of paths aiming at the stabilization of *nirodha*, I find it difficult to believe that in order to gain the ability to dwell in the condition of *nirodha* in an uninterrupted way it may suffice to enter the condition in question some four times. This difficulty stems

from an extrapolation of the way development along the Path occurs in the nondual Buddhist traditions we have been considering, which consider *nirodha* to be a deviation, but which assert the need to realize the true, nondual condition of all entities, and which make it clear that this nondual condition can only be realized upon the dissolution of the duality of subject and object that obscures it in *samsara*: such traditions make it quite clear that it does *not* suffice to realize this condition a small number of times for one to be able to dwell in it uninterruptedly. In fact, in the gradual Mahayana one may have to spend countless years (and lifetimes!) alternating between the Contemplation state that is beyond the subject-object and the inside-outside dualities, and the post-Contemplation state that involves these dualities, before finally attaining Buddhahood—which according to some texts occurs after three “countless aeons” (Skt., *kalpa*; Tib. *kal pa* or *bskal pa*). In the *Upadeshavarga* series of Dzogchen teachings, the most thorough Awakening possible may be attained in a single lifetime, but in general in order to achieve this aim one has to practice Tekchö for years, and then one has to practice Thögel for a further period: the subject-object duality and delusion in general have to liberate themselves spontaneously countless times for the propensities for delusion to manifest to be neutralized or burned out, so that the subject-object duality will arise no more and hence the nonduality of the Base will no longer be concealed. (Incidentally, in the excerpts cited above, Wilber identified *samsara* with the world of form, which is an error, for *samsara* corresponds to the threefold world of sensuality, form and formlessness, and though it is true that the idea is *not* to stop the manifestation of forms, the final result consists in the fact that form is no longer taken as object, for no subject arises to know it dualistically. As we have seen, this is the Fruit of the practices of Thögel and the Yangthik, in which the subject arises and liberates itself spontaneously again and again before the manifestations of rölpa energy without the latter disappearing, until the propensity for the former to manifest is totally neutralized or burned out. To conclude with the discussion of Wilber’s quotation, if the aim of the *Theravada* tradition were the same as that of the *Yoga* of Patañjali and the associated *Samkhya darshana* of Kapila, Shakyamuni would not have taught the Hinayana in the first promulgation of the doctrine, but would have referred his *shravaka* followers to the *Yogasutras* of Patañjali and the works by Kapila; however, on the contrary, he rejected all Brahmanic traditions, and in his Hinayana teachings he did not even teach any form of physical *Yoga*.)

To sum up, Wilber intended his seventh, eighth and ninth fulcra to be a progression of levels of realization following the sequence the inner Buddhist Tantras of the Path of transformation posit for the realization of the kayas, which begins with the *nirmanakaya*, continues with the

sambhogakaya, and concludes with the *dharmakaya*. However, as shown above, his fulcra cannot correspond to what these Tantras refer to by these names, for: (1) his seventh fulcrum is a spontaneous experience of oneness with nature, which may consist in a manifestation of the neutral condition of the base-of-all that then is followed by an experience of the formless realms located at the top of *samsara*, but in no case could it be a manifestation of the *nirmanakaya*; (2) he reduced his eighth fulcrum to the manifestation of non-ordinary strata of perception and subtle non-Jungian archetypes, without making it clear that for manifestations of the rölpa (*rol pa*) form of manifestation of energy to be instances of the *sambhogakaya* the awareness in which they appear has to be reGnized, as a result of which they manifest in the condition the Dzogchen teachings refer to as the “condition of the mirror;” and (3) his ninth fulcrum may be *either* a state of *nirodha* like the neutral condition of the base-of-all, *or* a samsaric state featuring the illusory subject-object duality in which, nonetheless, there is an intellectual understanding that the true condition of all entities is the nondual condition that the Dzogchen teachings call Dzogchen *qua* Base and that the Mahayana call *dharmata* or true nature of phenomena. Furthermore, as we have seen, in the *Upadeshavarga* or Menngagde series of *Ati Dzogpa* Chenpo—which, as noted above, Wilber has studied with at least one of the most important Masters of our time—the three kayas are realized in a sequence that is contrary to the one posited in the inner Tantras of the Path of transformation, and do not correspond to what these Tantras call by the same names.

It seems clear to me that the main problem with Wilber’s views and schemas is that he tries to unify traditions that cannot be unified, for they do not go through the same stages and do not lead to the same fruits. For example, his belief that both the structure of reality and the levels of realization are to be understood in terms of hierarchical (“holoarchical”) schemas seems to me to have been inspired by the *Upanishads*. The *Taittiriya Upanishad* tells the story of a father who, by refuting each of his son’s successive replies to the question of the identity of Brahman, guides him toward the discovery of the true nature of all reality: (1) matter is to be rejected because it does not account for vegetable growth; (2) *prana* or the vital principle is to be rejected because it does not account for the conscious phenomena of animal life; (3) *manas* or mind in an ample sense is to be rejected because it does not account for human intellectual phenomena; (4) *vijñana qua* self-consciousness is to be rejected insofar as it is subject to discord and imperfection, dualism and externality. Thus the son is led to the discovery that Brahman is realized in and as (5) *turiya-ananda*. In turn, in the *Chandogya Upanishad* there is a dialogue between Prajapati and Indra in which the latter is led

through similar stages to the discovery of the self that cannot be affected by experience, and which makes him draw similar consequences: (1) the corporeal is evidently affected by experience and thus must be rejected; (2) the empirical, which corresponds to the dream state, is also affected by its experiences; (3) the so-called “transcendental,” corresponding to dreamless deep sleep, is rejected insofar as it involves no consciousness or awareness. Finally, (4) the absolute is found, which is *ekam sat*. These four levels seem to have correlates in the *Mandukya Upanishad*, which distinguishes between: (1) awake experience; (2) dreams; (3) dreamless, deep sleep, and (4) the state of *turiya-ananda*.

However, the way *turiya-ananda* and *ekam sat* are referred to in the *Upanishads* does not seem to aptly describe what here I am calling Dzogchen *qua* Path or Dzogchen *qua* Fruit. In particular, the states posited in the *Mandukya Upanishad* seem to correspond to four of the intermediate states (Skt., *antarabhava*; Tib., *bar do*) that are posited in Tibetan Buddhism, none of which is Dzogchen *qua* Path or Dzogchen *qua* Fruit, for all of them are like reflections in the “mirror” of spontaneous awareness, rather than the reGnition of this awareness. In fact, from lower to higher according to the hierarchy set in the *Mandukya Upanishad*, the four states posited by this sacred text seem to correspond to: (1) awake experience, which is called bardo of birth or bardo between birth and death (Tib., *skyes gnas bar do* or *rang bzhin bar do*); (2) the dream state, which is called the bardo of dream (Tib., *rmi lam bar do*); (3) the state of dreamless deep sleep, which might correspond either to the bardo immediately following the moment of falling asleep, which is the same as the bardo immediately following the moment of death, or *chikai bardo* (*'chi ka'i bar do*), or to the subsequent state of unconsciousness; (4) non-conceptual absorptions, which might correspond to the bardo of *samadhi* (Tib., *bsam gtan bar do*), which includes specific instances of what various Hindu traditions call *nirvikalpa samadhi*. If this interpretation is correct, the state of *turiya-ananda* would not (be) and could by no means (be) Awakening or *nirvana*, for Awakening and *nirvana* do not at all correspond to the *samten bardo* or to any other bardo; contrariwise, Awakening and *nirvana* correspond to the reGnition of the spontaneous awareness in which, as in a mirror, the experiences of all bardos manifest—which results in the instant spontaneous liberation of the experience of whichever bardo be manifest at the moment.

As noted above, Wilber’s descriptions and classifications seem to be the result of unifying the accounts different traditions provide regarding the sequence of their respective paths and/or the essence of their respective views. However, some Paths lead to *nirvana*, others lead to higher realms of *samsara*, and still others may allow us to establish ourselves for some periods in the cessation (*nirodha*) represented by

neutral condition of the base-of-all. Among the Buddhist Paths leading to *nirvana*, some lead to the realization of a *shravaka*, others lead to the realization of a *pratyekabuddha*, others lead to the realization of a *bodhisattva*, and still others may lead to the realization of a *yogi*, to that of a *siddha*, to that of a *mahasiddha* or to that of a Buddha. Besides, there are gradual Paths and nongradual Paths. How could a single map be drawn that will be valid for all paths? An accurate description of a Path can only be achieved by someone who has successfully treaded it, on the basis of his or her own experience, and such description will only apply to the Path from which the description was drawn, and at best to other Paths based on the same principle. Therefore, it would be absurd to try to derive a “universal map of the Path” from one’s experience of the Path one has followed,⁶⁷ and it would be even more absurd to fabricate such “universal map” by piecing together accounts from different traditions, for if we put together the trunk of a mammoth, the teeth of a saber-toothed tiger, and the body of a dinosaur, what we obtain is a monster existing solely in our own fantasy. Such a concoction, rather than being a manifestation of “aperspectival freedom” (which as we have seen according to Wilber manifests in the sixth fulcrum, but which in truth is a consequence of the realization of the absolute truth of the Mahayana, or of the condition of Dzogchen, etc.), which necessarily involves understanding what each and every perspective responds to and may apply to, would in contrast spring from confusion and lack of perspective.

At any rate, it is a fact that Wilber’s descriptions and classifications fail to provide a clear criterion for distinguishing *samsara* from *nirvana*, and also fail to provide a clear criterion for distinguishing both of these from the base-of-all—such as the criterion set in the Dzogchen teachings.

The “Pre/Trans Fallacy” and the “Ascender/Descender Debate”

What Wilber calls the “pre/trans fallacy” (Wilber, 1993), which he attributes to Stanislav Grof and Michael Washburn (and which is directly related to what the same author referred to as the “ascender/descender debate” [Wilber, 1995]), is the “confusion of early, prepersonal life experiences for transpersonal experiences of higher consciousness.” In their turn, Grof (1985, 2000) and Washburn (1995) reject the assertion that there is such fallacy and contend that early, *prenatal* life experiences are legitimate sources of transpersonal experience and can be interpreted as instances of *deeper* consciousness.

I have objected to Wilber’s characterization of the process of Awakening as a progressive ascension through levels in a hierarchy or holoarchy (which may be related to the basic view of Abraham Maslow [1970]), not only because that process is one of seeing through the conditioned and

thus of deconditioning, or because it involves undoing the serial simulations described by Laing's diagram of a spiral of pretences (Capriles, 1977, 1986, 2000a, 2000b, work in progress 1), or because its structure and function are aptly expressed by the *Divine Comedy* (though in Dante's masterpiece only the first stage of the Path involves a descent, even the ascent that takes place in the two subsequent stages may be rightly categorized as a descent insofar as it constitutes a process of deconditioning), and so forth, but also because *nirvana* is the condition of absolute equality, whereas the illusory existence of levels and the discrimination between these is characteristic of *samsara*. For all these reasons, ascension is primarily to be seen as a movement away from authenticity consisting in climbing through the levels of *samsara* and toward the "peak of experience," and possibly beyond, into the meditative absorption of the base-of-all in which neither *samsara* nor *nirvana* are active.

However, Buddhism is the Middle Way, not only between hedonism and asceticism, existence and nonexistence, and so on, but also between descending and ascending. Though in the process of ontogeny we develop ever-greater skills, we do so at the expense of the greater wholeness proper of infancy. The same is not the case with the Path, in which at each stage we develop ever-greater skills (even though in some intermediate stages one may be obstructed by self-consciousness and conflict), but as we do so we are proceeding toward Awakening, in which absolute wholeness is indivisible from the most consummate skills. Because of this, and because each stage of realization depends on the achievement of the preceding one, the Path may also be seen as ascending. This is reflected by some of the Buddhist schemas of development along the Path, which "verticalize" the division into *samsara* and *nirvana*, placing *nirvana* in a superior plane and *samsara* in a lower one—by the same token instilling respect for the Buddhas, higher bodhisattvas and so on, and spurring seekers on the Path. In particular, gradual vehicles such as the *Shravakayana* and the *Bodhisattvayana* or gradual Mahayana depict the gradual Path of Awakening as a progressive ascension through five successive paths, each of which is indeed more advanced—in the sense of being less deluded and hence involving greater truth—than the preceding. Furthermore, as we have seen, the *Bodhisattvayana* or gradual Mahayana explains the last three of its five successive paths in terms of the ascension through eleven levels (Skt., *bhumi*; Tib., *sa*) that has been repeatedly referred to throughout this paper.

However, the above vehicles arose through the skillful means of a Buddha, who never believed that the true Path was ascending rather than descending, and who made it crystal clear throughout his teachings that the condition of adult human beings in *samsara* resulted from a process of *conditioning* that established countless illusory divisions,

giving rise to an experience he characterized in terms of the Pali term *sankhata* and the Sanskrit term *samskrita* (corresponding to the Tibetan term *'dus byas*)—which have the acceptations of "conditioned," "compounded," "composed," "intentionally contrived," "configured," "born" and "made up." He also made it clear that the Path consisted in *Seeing through* all that falls under the category designated by the Pali term *sankhata*, the Sanskrit term *samskrita* and the Tibetan term *düjé ('dus byas)*, into the original condition that he characterized in terms of the Pali term *asankhata* and the Sanskrit term *asamskrita* (corresponding to the Tibetan term *'dus ma byas*), which are rendered by terms such as "unconditioned," "uncompounded," "unborn," "unmade," "unconfigured," and "not intentionally contrived"—thereby implying that, from a phenomenological, ontological standpoint,⁶⁸ the Path was one of "descent." This is clearly evident in the *Atthasalini* (a commentary to the canonic Pali text *Dhamma Sangani* belonging to the *Shravakayana* of the *Theravada* and attributed to Vth Century A. D. teacher Buddhaghosha), in which we read (Guenther, 1964):

While healthy attitudes and meditative practices ranging over the three worlds (of sensuality, form and formlessness) build up and make grow birth and death in a never-ending circle and hence are called building-up practices, it is not so with this meditation. Just as if a man were to erect a wall eighteen cubits high, while another man were to take a hammer and to break down and to demolish any part as it gets erected, so also this meditation sets about to break down and to demolish death and rebirth that have been built up by healthy attitudes and meditative practices ranging over the three worlds, by bringing about a deficiency in those conditions which tend to produce birth and death, and therefore this meditation is called "the tearing down one" (*apachayagami*).

The simile of the man with a hammer should not lead us to believe that the true Path involves an active strife, for rather than actively striking delusion with the hammer of practice, as the excerpt itself notes the point is to *bring about a deficiency in those conditions that tend to produce birth and death*. This point—that Awakening cannot be attained by means of action—is made by many *Ch'an* and *Zen* stories (suffice to mention the dialogue between Ma-tsu and Huai-jang, or the poetry contest whereby Hui-neng became the Sixth Patriarch of *Ch'an* in China) that I have not space to quote in this paper, but which I have reviewed elsewhere (Capriles, 1977, 1986, 2000a, 2003, in greater detail, work in progress 1).

In Sufism, the principle expressed by the *Atthasalini* was illustrated with the story of a king who sponsored a

competition between two groups of painters—one Chinese, the other Greek (in Sana'i, the Chinese represented the genuine Path, which is “descending” in the sense I am using the term at this point, whereas the Greek represented the spurious “ascending” one; in Rumi, it was the other way around [Iqbal, 1964]). The king ordered the two groups of painters to adorn the walls of two rooms with doorways facing each other, and proceeded to lock each group of painters in their respective room until they completed their work. One group of painters set to paint the walls with unseen ability and proficiency of detail, whereas the other simply set to polish the walls in order to uncover their primordial mirror quality. One day, those who had been painting the walls sent the guard to call upon the king and, telling him they had completed their work, invited him to appraise it. When the king entered the room, he was speechless before the splendor of the paintings, and thought no one could surpass the work of these artists. However, as he was leaving the room, the second group of painters opened the doors to their room, upon which all that had been painted in the other room was reflected in its walls, appearing far more impressing and splendid. The king, as was due, decided the wall-polishers were the winners and handed them the prize. It must be noted, once again, that the active character of the simile should not lead us to believe that the true Path involves an active strife.

The principle illustrated by the two above references seems to be precisely the one that late 18th- early 19th century poet William Blake dealt with in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, which describes the same principle as Dante's *Divine Comedy* (for which, by the way, Blake produced visionary illustrations). He wrote (Blake, 1975, pp. xxi-xxii):

The ancient tradition that the world will be consumed in fire at the end of six thousand years is true, as I have heard from Hell.

For the cherub with his flaming sword is hereby commanded to leave his guard at the tree of life; and when he does, the whole creation will be consumed and appear infinite and holy, whereas it now appears finite & corrupt.

This will come to pass by an improvement of sensual enjoyment.

But first the notion that man has a body distinct from his soul is to be expunged; this I shall do by printing in the infernal method, by corrosives, which in Hell are salutary and medicinal, melting apparent surfaces away, and displaying the infinite that was hid.

If the doors of perception were cleansed everything would appear to man as it is, Infinite.

Beside the gradual Paths of the Sutrayana, Shakyamuni bequeathed us nongradual Paths such as the *Pratyekabuddhayana* and the Sudden Mahayana, and Garab Dorje gave us the Dzogchen *Atiyoga*, which is neither gradual nor sudden—and which is the one I have recurrently illustrated with the symbolism of the *Divine Comedy* (Capriles, 1977, 1986, 1989, 1994, 2000a, 2000b, work in progress 1, work in progress 2). The teachings of these systems make it clear that they do not involve an ascending progression, for Awakening is the sudden, instant unconcealment of the original condition that Dzogchen calls the Base (or Dzogchen *qua* Base) and that all of these systems characterize as unconditioned (Pali *asankhata*; Skt., *asamskrita*; Tib., *'dus ma byas*) and depict as a condition of total equality involving no “high” or “low,” no “up” or “down.” Furthermore, though the Dzogchen teachings sometimes follow the model of the gradual Mahayana and posit a sequence of levels (Skt., *bhumi*; Tib., *sa*), which in this case are sixteen, what is characteristic of Dzogchen Atiyoga is the view of the Path as a single level (Skt., *ekabhumi*; Tib., *sa gcig*), and thus as having neither bottom nor top. Finally, although the Dzogchen Path depicts a succession of three levels of realization that correspond to the three kayas of Buddhahood, they make it clear that each of these consists in a *more thorough unconcealment* of the original condition of absolute equality of Dzogchen *qua* Base—consisting in the *trikaya qua* Base—rather than being a higher level to be attained by climbing from a Base.

Therefore, though the Buddhist Paths are ultimately the Middle Way between ascent and descent, from a phenomenological, ontological standpoint *all* Buddhist systems would agree with Grof and Washburn (as well as with Jung [Jung, 1928, 1964/1968, 1972, 1975]⁶⁹ and in a sense also with Assagioli [1965]) in viewing genuine integration and transcendence as the result of a process of descent. In Dzogchen terms, in particular, it is by Seeing through and thus undoing all that has covered it and concealed it, that Dzogchen *qua* Base may be uncovered in the manifestation of Dzogchen *qua* Path and, in the long run, remain uncovered in Dzogchen *qua* Fruit. Washburn wrote (1995, p. 4⁷⁰):

Similar to the views of Jung, Grof, and Levin, the view presented here is one that postulates the existence of an original dynamic, creative, spontaneous source out of which the ego emerges, from which the ego then becomes estranged, to which, during the stages of ego transcendence, the ego returns, and with which, ultimately, the ego is integrated. Jung, Grof, Levin, and I differ in the specific ways in which we describe the basic source of the ego's existence and the ego's spiral journey of departure from and higher return to this source; neverthe-

less, the underlying paradigm is substantially the same.

Basically, I think Wilber loses sight of the transpersonal potentials of the deep unconscious and consequently mistakenly conceives of the course of [ontogenetic] development as a straight ascent to higher levels rather than as a spiral loop that, after departing from origins, bends back through origins on the way to transpersonal integration.

It is true that the ego emerges from an original dynamic, creative, spontaneous source—which here I am calling Dzogchen *qua* Base—from which it then becomes estranged. However, it is also important to emphasize the following facts: (1) that the source in question is the *trikaya qua* Base; (2) that in spite of the fact that, as underlined in the *Chuang Tzu*, the condition of the child is in many ways similar to Awakening, it is radically different from Awakening in that it does not at all involve the reGnition (of) the *trikaya qua* Base and does not even involve the capacity to deal with reality effectively; (3) that though the ego emerges from this source, the latter is not and cannot be reGnized in infancy before the arising of the ego, but on the contrary, can only be reGnized after the ego has been fully developed and, having become ripe, it is ready to fall from the tree of the internalized family and dissolve (and, in fact, among the few who obtain this reGnition, the great bulk do so as adults); (4) that despite the fact that realization involves going back to the source, this “going back,” rather than consisting in a going back to the unreGnized manifestation of Dzogchen *qua* Base, corresponds to the reGnition of this condition, which in samsaric beings is an unprecedented, wholly new occurrence; (5) that this reGnition is initially the *dharmakaya qua* Path, then the *sambhogakaya qua* Path, and finally the *nirmanakaya qua* Path; and (6) that when the *nirmanakaya qua* Path becomes stable the *trikaya qua* Fruit is obtained. The point is that, just like ascending properly speaking can only take place in *samsara* and leads us farther away from the source, merely descending to “deeper” consciousness, despite its value for reintegrating projections, facing the Jungian shadow (which I explain in terms of Susan Isaacs’ concept of unconscious phantasies, and as something that results from ontogenesis in civilized societies rather than as a “traces of our animal past” [Capriles, work in progress 1]) and so on, unless there is a reGnition of this source by the means traditional systems have always used to this end, will not give rise to a true liberation—or, what is the same, will not give rise to *nirvana*, which is the only liberation possible.

Hence in a special phenomenological sense the Path of Awakening consists in undoing the process whereby our original condition—the Base, which is the *trikaya* of

Buddhahood—was concealed and then perceived in an “inverted way:” initially the *trikaya qua* Base was ignored in the condition known as the base-of-all or *kunzhi* in which neither *nirvana* nor *samsara* are active, and then, when *samsara* manifested, the *trikaya qua* Base was experienced in an “inverted” way, for the phenomena of the energy or *thukje* aspect of the Base (the *nirmanakaya qua* Base) were experienced as though they were self-existent and hence as though they were inherently different from the essence or *ngowo* aspect of the Base (i.e., from the *dharmakaya qua* Base), which is voidness and which implies the absence of the self-existence we wrongly perceive in the phenomena of the energy or *thukje* aspect of the Base. However, this does not at all mean that these Paths may be reduced to the undoing of the illusory divisions and wayward habits resulting from the process of socialization, so as to discover a pre-existing condition that at some point was concealed by them—as though chronologically we “went back” to infancy, pre-natal life, the *bardo* or “previous lifetimes.” In the best of cases, such a chronological regression, involving the undoing of illusory divisions and wayward habits, could allow us to revive the more wholesome states experienced in infancy previously to the development of these illusory divisions and wayward habits, to revive intrauterine states, or to revive the states that manifested in the *bardo* or intermediate state between death and rebirth (or perhaps even states experienced in “previous lives”). However, by no means could it lead to the manifestation of Awake awareness *qua* Path and/or Awake awareness *qua* Fruit, for in ordinary, unenlightened individuals Awake awareness *qua* Path and/or *qua* Fruit does not manifest during infancy, or in intrauterine life, or in the *bardo*, or in “previous lives.”

For example, if there is no reGnition of *rigpa* upon the shining forth of the clear light in the *chikai bardo* (*chi ka'i bar do*) or *bardo* of the moment of death, the experience of the clear light will be a manifestation of the condition that the Dzogchen teachings call the base-of-all or *kunzhi* (some times called *rigpa qua* Base) in which neither *samsara* nor *nirvana* are active, and which involves the basic unawareness corresponding to *avidya* or *marigpa* (*ma rig pa*) in the first of the senses established by the Dzogchen teachings:⁷¹ the obscuration, by a contingent, beclouding element of stupefaction, of the nondual Awake self-awareness that the teachings of Dzogchen *Ati* call *rigpa*, so that the self-awareness in question cannot make patent its own face as *rigpa qua* Path or *rigpa qua* Fruit. Only in case *rigpa* had been reGnized when the clear light shone forth after the moment of death, or in subsequent stages of the *bardo* (or in “previous lives,” for that matter), could we *in some sense* say that *rigpa qua* Path is to be found by *retroceding* and *undoing*—and yet, since the reGnition of *rigpa* is beyond memory, and remembrance is a manifestation of mind understood as that which

conceals the true condition of primordial awareness, even if rigpa were reGnized in this undoing and retroceding, this reGnition would be a wholly new event requiring the application of specific instruction in the present (which, by the way, would be impossible in a state of regression). Therefore, merely by *retroceding* and *undoing*, *nirvana* and the Fruit of Awakening cannot be achieved—and yet on the more abrupt varieties of the Path all kinds of “repressed” (so to say) experiences may as well be relived.

The above shows that Buddhist Paths could only be properly viewed as a process of undoing and descending if these terms were understood in a special phenomenological, ontological sense rather than as referring to the recovery of a condition experienced in the past. In fact, the Fruit of the Paths in question is not a “Pre” condition, for it does *not* lie in the recovery of the greater wholeness of prepersonal stages in early infancy, in reviving the dualistic liberation of the moment of birth in a Basic Perinatal Matrix 4 (BPM4), or in cozily resting in a *samadhi* obtained through the stabilization of a BPM1 (i.e., of an experience of oneness like those that take place in intrauterine life) or of an instance of the neutral condition of the base-of-all such as those that may obtain when luminosity shines forth in the *chikhai bardo* (*’chi ka’i bar do*) or bardo of the moment of death. The Dzogchen Path, in particular, consists in the recurrent reGnition of rigpa, which each and every time is a wholly new occurrence, and the Fruit is but the irreversible stabilization of this reGnition. Therefore, it may be said to be the Middle Way between descending and ascending—and yet it seems important to warn that presenting it as ascending is more incorrect and more liable to give rise to ego-distortions than presenting it as descending. Since the early Wilber failed to discriminate between the different types of transpersonal states, since the late Wilber misrepresents the stages of the Path and asserts Awakening to involve the subject-object duality, and since both the early and the late Wilber present the Path as a process of ascension, there can be no doubt that Wilber has always misrepresented the structure and function of the Path.

Thus the Dzogchen Path, in particular, may not be characterized in terms of the spurious dichotomies Wilber posited in terms of what he called the “Pre / Trans Fallacy” (Wilber, 1993) and the “Ascender/Descender Debate” (Wilber, 1995). In fact, from the standpoint of Dzogchen, both factions of the current debate would be equally off the mark. Wilber would be wrong in positing a “higher self” and a process of gradual climbing to it that results in Awakening, for the process of Awakening consists in the progressive discovery of the Base that is both the foundation and the *prima materia* of all conditioned constructions that in *samsara* conceal that very Base, rather than consisting in climbing—which is something that can only take place in

samsara and that leads to higher samsaric realms—toward a hypothetical “higher self.” Furthermore, in the previous section it was shown that Wilber’s description of the successive levels or fulcra to be attained is definitely mistaken, at least in what regards the higher forms of Buddhism. In their turn, Grof and Washburn would be mistaken if they actually believed the aim of genuine spiritual Paths to be the mere undoing of the constructions established in the process of ontogenetic evolution in order to discover a “deeper self.” Furthermore, when Wilber objects that Washburn (Washburn, 1995) and Grof (1985, 2000) are confusing early, prepersonal life experiences with what he vaguely calls “transpersonal experiences,” he is ignoring that the prepersonal experiences of early and prenatal life that manifest in regressive processes are perfectly analogous to many non-nirvanic transpersonal experiences. In their turn, Grof and Washburn fail to admit that there can be no liberation in merely going back to a deeper consciousness or to a “deeper self,” or in obtaining transpersonal experiences: they share the error, common to a great deal of transpersonal psychologists and to the early Wilber, of mistaking transpersonal experiences for higher sanity, failing to realize that Awakening, which alone is truly liberating, does not lie in dwelling in a particular condition or in the manifestation of a particular kind of experience, but in the reGnition and spontaneous liberation of whatever experience manifests. In other words, Wilber, Grof, Washburn and other transpersonal and “integral” psychologists fail to make the above-mentioned key distinction between: (1) *nirvana*, in which liberation and true harmony lie; (2) the base-of-all or *kunzhi* in which neither *nirvana* nor *samsara* are active, which is but an oasis on the Path that will become a jail if taken for the final destination; and (3) higher samsaric experiences such as those of the formless realms, the form realms and the higher regions of the realm of sensuality, which are but more pleasant instances of delusion that will sooner or later give way to more unpleasant instances of delusion.

The dispute seems to stem from the fact that both sides are based on seemingly contrary errors, which may have ensued from the methods each employs. Grof has based himself in his observation of psychedelic experiences (whether or not drug-induced), which he interprets as involving a regression from personal states to perinatal states, which despite their condition as prepersonal states, often may correspond to transpersonal states; then, he posits the latter states—some of which are beyond birth on the way back followed by the process of regression—as the sanity that is to be attained through the type of therapy he advocates. This approach of “descent into chaos” suggests the symbolism of a regression from the ego and from the concomitant inhibition/repression/bad faith, which allows entrance into the sphere of what Freud referred to as the *id*

as a precondition for reintegration and sanity. I tend to believe that Wilber, on the other hand, has based himself mainly on meditation as the core of a progressive process of ascension to transpersonal states, which as such involves developing ego-mechanisms far beyond the degree they reach in normal adults—and therefore he views the Fruit as being far beyond the normal condition of adulthood in a process of progression. However, some avow that also through this approach there may be some kind of going beyond repression, the difference being that in it repressed contents are supposed to gradually enter the spheres of ego and consciousness, which are not supposed to suddenly dissolve into chaos (even though at the end they are supposed to dissolve in the realization of egolessness) (Daniels, 2004). Though the transpersonal states achieved through both methods are genuinely transpersonal, Grof and Washburn, as well as the early Wilber, are utterly wrong in positing their vaguely defined “transpersonal states” as the supreme sanity to be sought, which in truth can only be attained through the practice of the methods of genuine Wisdom traditions leading to the reGnition of the Base or true nature of whatever states may manifest, no matter to what realm they may belong (personal, prepersonal, postpersonal, transpersonal, perinatal, or whatever). In his turn, the late Wilber is wrong in positing Awakening as a dualistic experience that has been impregnated by the “single taste” of the true condition of reality.

If Wilber’s views truly derived from the practice of meditation, the methods on which he based himself would be of the same general kind as those of Buddhist Paths in general; however, in genuine Buddhist Paths, the higher states of the three *samsara* realms attained by these means are only deemed useful if used for the specific purposes for which they are traditionally used in Buddhist Paths, and if there is awareness that these states are within *samsara*. In their turn, the approach of Grof and Washburn would correspond to that of Dzogchen *Ati* and other Buddhist Paths (and therefore to what is expressed in this paper as well) if, rather than “descending” in order to have the experience of basic perinatal matrixes wrongly taken to be aims in themselves, this “descent” were undertaken in order to turn contradiction into conflict and in this way facilitate the reGnition (of) the true condition of all concepts and all concept-tinged experiences (for, as we have seen, if delusion becomes pleasant, nothing will detect its existence and hence we will not be reminded to apply the instructions that are the condition of possibility of its spontaneous liberation). There can be no doubt, therefore, that the dispute arises from the fact that neither of the parts is firmly rooted in a genuine Wisdom tradition—and since neither of the parts has had the realizations that are the essence of the Path in genuine Wisdom traditions, both are wide off the mark.

(Also authors not belonging to the transpersonal movement—such as for example Janov, whose views were briefly reviewed in Capriles [2000b, work in progress 1]—have posited paths that must be classified as “descending.”)

In the Dzogchen teachings, the highest and supreme realization possible is the one attained through the practices of Thögel and/or the Yangthik, which are carried out in the bardo (which, however, does not mean that one should die in the physical/clinical sense of the term: one must enter the bardo while the physical body is alive, and deal with bardo experiences the Dzogchen way, so that all that manifests liberates itself spontaneously and in this way the propensities for delusion are progressively neutralized, until they no longer have any hold on the practitioner). And the bardo may equally be seen as lying in the past, which is the direction in which according to some interpretations Grof and Washburn place realization, or as lying in the future (i.e., in the direction in which according to Wilber realization lies). Furthermore, Awakening is neither the summit of a pyramid nor the bottom of an ocean, but the condition of absolute equality in which there is neither high nor low, neither upwards nor downwards, and which consists in the spontaneous liberation of the experiences of the summit, the bottom and the middle.

Sean Kelly (1998, p. 128; also in Daniels, 2004, p. 76) noted, “an essential task for transpersonal theory will be to set Wilber’s paradigm in dialogue with those of Grof (Grof, 1975, 1985, 1987, 1996, 2000) and Washburn (1995), currently the two most substantial alternatives to Wilber’s paradigm.” Though in my view Grof’s view of the genesis and character of COEX systems might need to be completed and set in perspective, I believe the concept of such systems might be part of a future synthetic system of metatranspersonal psychology; likewise, the creation by the Grofs of a “Spiritual Emergency Network” is one of the most useful developments in psychological therapy, insofar as such refuges can potentially help save people who unwillingly and unknowingly have had psychotomimetic experiences or set on psychotic journeys—which, though in themselves they are not Paths leading to Awakening, in the right setting and with the right guidance can become spontaneous healing processes, as they seemingly used to be in Paleo-Siberian Shamanism (so that what Washburn called “regression in the service of transcendence” is actually “regression in the service of a more balanced ego open to transpersonal realms”). I think in his turn Wilber is correct when he suggests that the states found in processes of descent like the ones studied by Washburn and Grof may be mistaken for the realms of highest aspiration, and so those who become content with them may forsake the quest for true Awakening; however, exactly the same may occur with the states Wilber posits in his maps of spiritual ascension,

which, as we have seen, in Buddhist terms are *not* instances of *nirvana*—and, even worse, there is no way one may attain Awakening if one insists on conserving the subject-object duality and the illusion of substantiality. Furthermore, I believe for the dialogue in question to be fruitful it should include Jungian psychology, antipsychiatry (in the amplest sense of the term in which it also includes Laing, Basaglia, and many others), Freudian psychoanalysis, some trends of British psychoanalysis,⁷² existential psychoanalysis (and in particular a reinterpretation of Sartre’s theory of bad faith) and other relevant systems. At any rate, for such a dialogue not to be dry speculation begetting wrong views, it must be undertaken in the context of a genuine understanding of Awakening or *nirvana* and of the means wisdom traditions have always used to achieve this condition, on the basis of personal practice of at least one such tradition. This is what I have attempted in Part II of *Capriles* (work in progress 1), “Beyond Mind,” on a chapter of which, as we have seen, this paper was based.

End Notes

¹The term “Dzogchen” has been translated both as “great completion” and as “great perfection.” Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu advises us to translate “chenpo” (*chen po*) as total rather than great, because in this case what the term refers to is absolute rather than relative. In their turn, both completion and perfection are valid acceptations of “dzogpa” (*rdzogs pa*), but the former, which is realized as plenitude, is more directly related to the *katak* (*ka dag*) aspect of the Base, whereas the latter is more directly related to the *lhundrub* (*lhun grub*) aspect of the Base—both of which will be briefly discussed in the text (for a detailed explanation of all of this, cf. *Capriles*, 2003).

²In terms of the Mahayana the essential impurity is the delusive appearance of self-existence: this is why the voidness of the Base, which implies the voidness of self-existence of all entities, is its “primordial purity” aspect.

³As we have seen, in the Dzogchen teachings voidness is the *ngowo* (*ngo-bo*) or “essence” aspect of the Base, which is the emptiness that allows our awareness to “fill itself” with any appearances. The phenomena that appear to us depend on our awareness (as well as on our mental functions and on the rest of phenomena) in order to appear the way they appear to us and to be what they are to us; therefore, they are void of the self-existence or substantiality (Tib., *rang stong*) that the deluded mind projects on them (and since they are impermanent and subject to constant change, they also lack the subsistence the deluded mind projects on them). And if the phenomena that seem so concrete are in truth empty, no matter how many of them may manifest, the Base’s essence or *ngowo* (*ngo bo*) will not be

modified in any sense or degree and thus the Base will continue to be void. Furthermore, since the phenomena in question are not substances extraneous to the awareness represented by the mirror, this awareness is also void in the sense of the Tibetan term *zhentong* (*gzhan stong*): it is void of extraneous substances.

⁴We could say of the three aspects of Dzogchen *qua* Base that essence is the *dharmakaya qua* Base (which is realized when the phenomena of *dang* [*gdangs*] energy are correctly apprehended), nature is the *sambhogakaya qua* Base (which is realized when the phenomena of *rölpa* [*rol pa*] energy are correctly apprehended), and energy is the *nirmanakaya qua* Base (which is realized when the phenomena of *tse* [*rtsal*] energy are correctly apprehended). In regard to the two aspects, we could say that the *katak* aspect of the Base is the *dharmakaya qua* Base and that the *lhundrub* aspect of the Base is the *rupakaya qua* Base. In short, in the Base, in the Path, and in the Fruit we can choose to distinguish two or three aspects, according to the circumstances.

⁵I discussed the three modes of manifestation of energy in *Capriles* (2000a) and, more thoroughly, in *Capriles* (2003); a more correct and thorough discussion of them will appear in the upcoming definitive version of *Capriles* (2003) and, more extensively, in *Capriles* (work in progress 2).

⁶Dzogchen translations often speak of recognizing thoughts as the *dharmakaya*, of recognizing the true condition, essence or nature of thoughts, and so on. In all such cases, what the texts are referring to is *not* what normally we understand for “recognition,” which is the understanding of a pattern (Skt., *lakshana*; Tib., *mtshan-dpe*) in terms of a delusorily valued concept, but the unveiling of the true nature of thought, utterly beyond conceptual recognition and beyond the subject-object duality, manifesting as the *dharmakaya*. It was in order to make clear the distinction between that which the texts refer to, and what is usually termed “recognition,” that I coined the neologisms “reGnition,” “reGnize,” and so on.

However, the neologisms “reGnition,” “reGnize” and so on are far from perfect, for the prefix “re” may convey the wrong idea that a new event called “Gnition” takes place each and every time that which I am calling “reGnition” occurs (just as, each and every time there is recognition, a new cognition takes place). This is not correct because, though reGnition is beyond doubt a Gnitive event, this event consists in the *unveiling* of the primordial Gnosis that is the true nature of thought and in general of all mental phenomena, and which neither arises nor disappears. However, since all alternatives I considered were far more inadequate than the neologisms “reGnition,” “reGnize” and so on, and since in practice there is new Gnitive event each and every time reGnition occurs, I decided to use these

neologisms.

⁷This condition involving unawareness of the true nature of the Base manifests again and again in normal human experience: it manifests between one thought and the next, between an experience and the next, and so on. It is said to be neutral because, just like when the gearbox is in neutral a car moves neither forward nor backward, in the base-of-all neither *nirvana* nor *samsara* manifest: *nirvana* is not manifest because the base-of-all involves a contingent, beclouding element of stupefaction (*rmongs cha*) that obscures rigpa's inherent nondual self-awareness, preventing it from making patent rigpa's own face in the manifestation of rigpa *qua* Path and rigpa *qua* Fruit; however, *samsara* is not manifest either, because the base-of-all is a nonconceptual and nondual condition free from the delusory valuation of thought and hence of the subject-object duality, which does not involve delusion as such. In fact, in the condition of the base-of-all *avidya* or *ma rig pa* has not yet manifested in the second sense the term has in the Dzogchen teachings discussed in note 10 to this paper (i.e., as active delusion giving rise to dualistic appearances)—but only in the first of these senses: as the already mentioned beclouding of the clear nondual self-awareness that “makes patent rigpa's own face.” This condition may be prolonged by meditational techniques, psychedelic drugs and a host of other means, so as to become a *nirvikalpa* absorption characterized by *nirodha* or cessation. According to circumstances it may be called: “primordial, profound base-of-all” or *ye don kun gzhi*; “dimension of the base-of-all” or *kun gzhi kham*; and base-of-all carrying propensities or *bag chags kyi kun gzhi*. I have discussed the base-of-all extensively in Capriles (2000a, 2000b, 2003, 2004).

⁸In Daniélou (1984), we are offered ample evidence of the unity of the Shaiva tradition of ancient India, the Dionysian tradition of ancient Greece, and the Egyptian cult of Osiris. Mount Kailash is the home of Shiva, and as Tucci (1970; English 1980) tells us, also the Zurvanists and the Ismaelians had it as a place of pilgrimage—the identity between the ancient Persian god Zurvan and Shiva being substantiated by the fact that, like Shiva Mahakala, Zurvan is total time (and total space), and like the Ardhanarishwara form of Shiva, Zurvan is a hermaphrodite deity. In their turn, many Taoists have asserted the unity of their own tradition with that of ancient Bön (*bon*)—which I have substantiated with the fact that Lao-tzu gave the *Tao-Te-Ching* to an officer of the Sino-Tibetan border upon leaving China for Tibet, and with a series of coincidences in the imagery (for example, that of the snake that sheds its skin), views, and practices of both traditions (cf. Capriles, 2003 and other works). All this may be explained by the fact that, as we read in Norbu (Italian 1997) and in many credible Bönpo (*bon po*) sources, Primordial Master Shenrab

Miwoche, who taught Dzogchen in the area of Mount Kailash around 1,800 BC, had among his disciples the great sages Mutsa Trahe of Tazig (Persia or Tadzhikistan), Hulu Baleg of Sumba (in what is today Pakistani Kashmir), Lhadag Nagdro of India, Legtang Mangpo from China, and Serthog Chejam of Khrom (also in what is today Pakistani Kashmir)—all of whom translated into their respective languages and spread in their native lands the teachings of Shenrab.

⁹Paul Claudel remarked that “*la connaissance est la co-naissance du sujet et de l'objet*.” knowledge is the co-emergent birth of subject and object. Just as the word “knowledge” in French involves the prefix “co,” so does the term “cognitivity” in English, which thus implies the co-emergence and the interdependence of a subject and an object. This is why I had to coin the neologism “Gnitiveness” (capitalized and lacking the prefix “co”) for referring to the capacity that in *samsara* manifests as the cognitivity that involves the subject-object duality, and in *nirvana* manifests as the nondual gnoses of the Path and the Fruit.

¹⁰The three senses the terms *avidya* and its Tibetan equivalent, marigpa (*ma rig pa*) have in the Dzogchen teachings are:

(i) *Avidya* or marigpa *qua* the concealment/inhibition, by an element of stupefaction, of the self-reCognition of nondual Awake awareness' own face and hence of Dzogchen *qua* Base, so that there is unawareness of the true nature of all reality and *nirvana* is not manifest. This is the first type of *avidya*, for it manifests in the neutral condition of the base-of-all (*kun gzhi lung ma bstan*), before active delusion gives rise to dualistic appearances involving the illusion of self-existence and hence to *samsara*; however, it continues to be manifest when *samsara* arises and so long as *samsara* continues to function (for a more exhaustive explanation of this type of *avidya* or marigpa the reader is directed to note 7 to this paper).

(ii) *Avidya* or marigpa *qua* delusion properly speaking, which results from the delusory valuation of thought and hence involves (a) the illusory subject-object duality that results from the delusory valuation of the threefold thought-structure (Tib., *'khor gsum*) and that manifests as the grasper and the grasped (Tib., *gzung 'dzin*), and (b) the confusion lying in taking the relative to be absolute, the insubstantial to be substantial, the dependent to be inherently existing, what lacks value and importance as having inherent value and importance, the unsatisfactory as providing satisfaction, and so on, and which is the core of *samsara*. It involves an inverted cognition insofar as the three aspects of the Base, which are ngowo (*ngo bo*), rangzhin (*rang bzhin*) and thukje (*thugs rje*), seem to be inherently separate

from each other: the phenomena of the thukje aspect seem to be substantial rather than void, and therefore seem to have an essence different from the ngowo aspect, which is voidness and which is completely ignored.

(iii) *Avidya* or marigpa *qua* the inability, so long as (ii) is active, to realize that we are under delusion: this type of *avidya* lies in ignoring (*mi-sbes-pa*) that the dualistic appearances that arise by virtue of the second type are false and baseless, and is the condition for the latter type of *avidya* to go on, for without it the contradiction constituted by the second type would turn into conflict and thus there would be a possibility of surpassing it. This is why it has been said that in order to escape from jail first we have to realize that we are in jail, and why Shantideva said that in regard to the hair representing the suffering of *samsara*, the superior bodhisattva (who does not fully have this third type of *avidya* or *ma rig pa*) has ceased to be like the palm of the hand and become like the globe of the eye, from which the hair will have to be extracted. And, in fact, this type of *avidya* is lacking in the post-Contemplation state of higher bodhisattvas, who are aware that the dualism and substantiality they experience is an illusion, and have some awareness of apparitionality. (The undoing of *avidya* or *ma rig pa* in the third of the senses the term has in the Dzogchen teachings is concomitant with a rise in the bioenergetic volume/modification of brain biochemistry: this rise tends to inhibit this type of *avidya*, and the turning of contradiction into conflict resulting from the inhibition of this type of *avidya* or *ma rig pa* tends to cause the bioenergetic volume to further increase.)

The delusion that, in terms of a Mahayana interpretation, is the Second Noble Truth, and that the *Prajñāparamitasūtras* (Second Promulgation) explained in terms of taking the insubstantial as being substantial, the dependent as existing inherently, the relative as absolute, and so on, is the result of the combination of the above three types of *avidya*. Therefore it is only when *samsara* is active (and therefore when *avidya* or *ma rig pa* also manifests as the second and third types) that the terms *avidya* and *ma rig pa* are to be translated as “delusion.”

¹¹Heraclitus, who in my view (which I amply substantiate in Capriles [work in progress 4]) was a representative of the Dionysian tradition, expressed the myth of *lila* in Fragment 123 DK, in which he tells us that the *physis*—the unconditioned Totality of nature and the true condition of all of the entities that manifest in our conditioned experience—“likes to hide (*kríptesthai*).” If what hides in the concealment that Heraclitus called *lete* is the *physis*, then *aletheia*—the “unveiling of the true”—must necessarily con-

sist in the patency of the *physis* that is the true condition of all entities. In fact, Fr. 50 DK tells us that those who listen, not to the “I,” but to the *lógos* (another name for the *physis*, which Heraclitus used when he intended to emphasize its cognitive or spiritual aspect), wisely acknowledge that all is one (which does not mean that Heraclitus fell into the error of positing the concept of oneness as the absolute: in a bid to help its readers go beyond the delusory valuation of concepts, his book repeatedly affirms contradictory concepts—as evident, e.g., in Fr. DK 206). The idea is that the illusion of separation in space and time inherent to the human existent (and therefore also the multiplicity of such existents), as well as the seeming multiplicity of entities that appear solely as object, are conditioned, fragmentary, illusory appearances that veil the unconditioned, unfragmented *physis*, and which pertain to the veil that must fall in *aletheia*. In fact, as expressed in Fr. 2 DK, though the *lógos* is common, each individual believes he or she has a separate, particular and private intellect: the cognitive principle that functions as the awareness and intelligence of each and every individual is the (universal) *lógos* that constitutes the cognitive or spiritual aspect of the *physis* and that, being common to all, could not be limited in space and time—the illusory, apparently separate intellect that is the nucleus of the human existent thus being but a false appearance that deluded humans mistakenly take for their true, innermost self. In turn, Fr. 89 DK tells us that, though for the Awake Ones there is one single and common world, each and every one of the asleep ones goes astray toward his or her particular [dream-] world: these “particular [dream-]worlds” are conditioned, fragmented products of the delusory valuation of thought, and as such they imply the concealment (*lete*) of the unconditioned and unfragmented *physis/lógos* that we all (are) in truth. Thus *lete* is the basic concealment that is the essence of the myth of *lila*, and *aletheia* consists in Awakening from the dream of apparently absolute separateness and multiplicity that has as its core the human individual’s illusion of being a human existent limited in space and time. Furthermore, Heraclitus makes clear the intimate relation between the myth of *lila* and the traditional cyclic, degenerative view of time, evolution and history, when in Fr. B 52 DK he tells us that *Aiôn* (the cosmic time cycle: Skt. *kalpa*) is the checkers-playing child to whom [real] kingship belongs. (Heraclitus seems to compare the *aiôn* with a child to whom kingship belongs for the same reasons why the Tantra of the Semde series of Dzogchen teachings called *Kunche Gyälpo* [*Kun byed rgyal po*] or the “All-creating King” refers to the nature of mind as All-creating King: because all that appears may be said to be part of the “play” of this nature.)

In their turn, the Stoics, who claimed to be giving continuity to the views of Heraclitus’ (though actually they

developed a rationalism that would have caused the illustrious Ephesian to frown), laid a very strong emphasis on the degenerative view of human evolution and history, which they expressed in terms of the Persian and Greek symbolism of the four successive metals, each less precious than the former (in Greece this tradition was Dionysian and in Persia it was Zurvanist; after having being lost in Greece, Hesiod reimported it from Persia). In the view of the Stoics, just as in that of the Bönpos of the Himalayas (cf., for example, Reynolds, 1989), in the original Golden Age there was neither state nor government, neither property nor social divisions, and no individual family; in the terminology of the Stoics, human beings were “ruled” by the spontaneity of the *lógos*.

¹²In Capriles (1994), the accentuation of the delusory valuation of thought and of the ensuing phenomenon of being, dualisms and so on in the process of the degenerative evolution of humankind was explained as the development of contradiction, both (1) insofar as we experience contradiction only if the terms of what we are to experience as a contradiction are sustained by the delusory valuation of thought and therefore by the phenomenon of being, and (2) insofar as the situations we perceive as contradictions within human beings, between human beings, between human groups, and between humankind and the rest of the ecosphere, result from degenerative evolution.

Regarding (1), it must be noted that when being disappears in Dzogchen *qua* Path or Dzogchen *qua* Fruit, we do not experience contradiction even if we are faced with situations that otherwise would be seen as sheer contradictions. It is well known that the *Zen* Buddhist method that the Japanese call *koan* (Chinese: *kung an*) study, consists in confronting students with what they perceive as an unsolvable contradiction and requiring that they resolve it. So long as they are under delusion, the students will strive day and night to solve the *koan*. However, at some point their effort to understand in terms of delusorily valued thoughts will collapse and the students will no longer perceive a contradiction in what they were trying to solve. Then, for a longer or shorter period, they will be in a state of unlimited freedom, beyond the yoke of the delusory valuation of concepts and, therefore, beyond all limits. Similarly, that which Gregory Bateson (1972, Part III) called pathogenic double-bind will produce a pathological effect on the child with corresponding predispositions, but will not produce the same effect in a normal adult and will not produce any effect whatsoever in the individual who has become free from delusory valuation. (For the two types of double-bind Bateson posited and the extra one I posited, see Capriles [2000b, work in progress 1].)

Higher bodhisattvas perceive contradictions as such in their post-Contemplation state (though they do so

with lesser force than ordinary individuals), and insofar as they perceive a contradiction they work toward its resolution. In their turn, the Buddhas do not perceive any contradictions at any moment whatsoever, yet they spontaneously do whatever is needed in order to solve what ordinary beings may validly perceive as contradictions.

¹³I titled “Integral Psychology” the lecture on psychology I gave repeatedly in three series of lectures in 1984 and 1985, which then were turned into Capriles (1986). However, I was unaware that the same year Wilber would publish a homonymous book (1986; Spanish 1993) and cease using the term “transpersonal.” Since I had no intention of assimilating myself to those grouped under the term “integral” (such as Aurobindo Ghose, Jean Gebser, Haridas Chaudhuri, Ervin Laszlo, co-founder of Esalen Institute Michael Murphy, Clare W. Graves, Graves’ disciple Don Beck, Beck’s associate Chris Cowan and Ken Wilber), as soon as I saw Wilber’s book I stopped using the term.

¹⁴In Part III of the book of which this paper was originally a chapter (Capriles, work in progress 1), I discuss the degenerative view of human evolution and history, and contrast it with the progressive views of Hegel, Wilber, Habermas and so on, providing substantial evidence of the spiritual and social superiority of primitive beings, and showing the reasons why I deem the various progressive views to be mistaken. Also in Capriles (1994) and to some extent in Capriles (1992) I discuss both views and argue in favor of the former. Steve Taylor (2003, 2005) has provided even ampler evidence of the spiritual and social superiority of primal human beings; however, following James DeMeo, he claims the Fall occurred because of fortuitous coincidences.

¹⁵It is well-known that Freud developed the concept of Thanatos in the context of the explanation of the neurosis of repetition; Bateson (1971) widened its scope and made the concept clearer by identifying it with the positive feedback loop at the root of many psychoses. I myself have used it, in Bateson’s wider sense, to explain the mechanisms of the degenerative evolution of humankind through the time cycle (Capriles, 1994, work in progress 1), as well as the dynamics of some of the higher Dzogchen practices (Capriles, 1977, 1986, 2000a, 2003, work in progress 1, work in progress 2).

¹⁶This is Heidegger’s term (Heidegger, 1996 and throughout his works; cf. Capriles, work in progress 1), which refers to the human mode of being, which somehow implies being outside oneself.

¹⁷Passing through the hole at the bottom of Hell leads to Purgatory because henceforth those going through this process will know from their own experience that the process is not a dead-end eternal Hell, but a temporary passage on the Path to Awakening. In Purgatory conflict arises,

rapidly exacerbates itself, and liberates itself spontaneously again and again. And finally in Heaven the recurrent spontaneous liberation of subtler delusions completes the process of neutralization of all delusive propensities, until the individual can establish him or herself in the Empyrean, corresponding to the *Akanishtha* Pure Land (Tib., *'Og min stug po bkod pa'i zhing*)—the pure dimension of Awakening, the natural expression of the Awake condition, the *dharmadhatu* garden of the Primordial Buddha, which insofar as it was not created or produced, will not dissolve or be destroyed.

In fact, Dzogchen *qua* Fruit represents liberation in regard to all experiences characterized and conditioned by delusion, including, (1) the spurious paradises of the three spheres of the god realm (of sensuality, of form and or formlessness), (2) the limbo of normality, and (3) the conflictive, pain-ridden hells and other “lower realms.” It constitutes the surpassing of the dualism between hells and paradises and, in general, of all dualisms.

¹⁸The “peak of experience” (Skt., *bhavagra*) is the fourth and highest of the formless realms or *arupa* lokas that will be considered in a note below, and which is called “the dominion in which there is neither perception nor absence of perception” (Skt., *naivasamjñānasamjñā-samapatti*), for in it gross discrimination is left behind and there is only the subtlest of discriminations.

¹⁹The feather at the top represents the realm of sensuality, which is worn as an adornment (and which in terms of my explanation involves the highest degree of being); the crown in the middle represents the realm of form (which in terms of my explanation has a middle degree of being); the brim at the bottom represents the realm of formlessness (which in terms of my explanation has the lowest degree of being).

²⁰These three senses were explained in note 10 to this paper. The third type of *avidya* is necessary for the second to maintain itself.

²¹Maslow (1979) showed wisdom in warning that for such “peak experiences” to be truly valuable they would have to arise in the context of the application of a self-consistent method; I would add that only ancient Wisdom traditions have truly self-consistent methods making it possible to use experiences in order to move from *samsara* to Awakening: the experience must be used as an impressive reflection in a mirror, which allows discovery of the reflecting nature of the mirror.

Furthermore, upon learning that many of his readers were resorting to all kinds of means for obtaining “peak experiences” outside the context of a self-consistent method, Maslow switched the emphasis from the concept in question to that of “plateau experiences,” which was also used by the Indian author U. A. Asrani, and which Maslow illustrated with the image of “a mother seeing a child play” (quite

similar to the Dzogchen image of old man seeing children play). In Cleary & Shapiro (1996), we read (p. 218):

Indeed, his journals (Maslow, 1979) reveal that by 1969, Maslow became convinced that the emotionality and excitability inherent in peak experiences may have been overvalued. He went on to say that having a glimpse of transcendent states through a peak experience was not the only way or even the best way to acquire and sustain higher transcendent experiences (Maslow, 1970; Krippner, 1972). Although he believed these glimpses might occasionally be useful, Maslow also arrived at the conclusion that an inordinate emphasis on such glimpses was a hindrance (Maslow, 1971, 1979)... [Furthermore, he] expressed considerable ire in several of his journal entries (Maslow, 1979) that his concept of peak experience had been misused to justify indulging in experientialism for its own sake... Maslow came to feel that appreciation of ordinary experience was not only an essential component of, but that it served as a trigger to, higher states of consciousness such as the plateau experience (Maslow, 1970; Krippner, 1972).

Though the concept of “plateau experience” may to some extent serve as an antidote to overvaluation of peak experiences and attachment to the emotionality and excitability that typify the samsaric varieties of these experiences, it does not solve the root problem I see in the concept of peak experience, which is that it comprehends experiences of *samsara*, absorptions of the neutral base-of-all, and instances of *nirvana* of the kind that I have been referring to as the Dzogchen *qua* Path, preventing discrimination among these extremely different conditions. The main advantage of switching the emphasis from the concept of “peak experiences” to that of “plateau experiences”—even though this term still conveys the idea of a “high”—seems to be that it would discourage the avid search for explosive instants that characterized the hippies in the 1960s and which produced many unwanted effects, and *might* in *some cases* be conducive to a discovery of the Tao/Buddha-nature (or however we call the ultimate) in ordinary experience. However, this would be possible only in those who have had access to the meta-experience of *nirvana* that I am calling the Dzogchen *qua* Path, which is the very kernel of the Path, and which the practice of Dzogchen must stabilize.

²²The four formless absorptions (*arupyasamapatti* or *arupa-samadhi*) are: (1) the dominion of the infinitude of space (Skt., *akashanantya-samapatti*); (2) the dominion of the infinitude of consciousness (Skt., *vijñānanantya-samapatti*); (3) the dominion where there are no “whats” (Skt., *akimchanya-samapatti*); (4) the dominion in which there is

neither perception nor absence of perception (Skt., *naivasamjñānasamjñā-samapatti*), for gross discrimination is left behind and there is only the subtlest of discriminations.

By firmly establishing oneself in one of the above absorptions, one takes birth in the corresponding dominion among the four formless realms (Skt., *chatur arupa-loka*), which correspond to the four sections of the formless sphere (Skt., *chaturarupyadhātu*; Tib., *gzugs med khams pa'i gnas bzhi*), and which are: (1) the activity field of the infinitude of space (Skt., *akashanantyaayatana*; Tib., *nam mkha' mtha' yas skye mched*); (2) the activity field of the infinitude of consciousness (Skt., *vijñānanantyaayatana*; Tib., *rnam shes mtha' yas skye mched*); (3) the activity field where there are no “whats” (Skt., *akimchanyatana*; Tib., *ci yang med pa'i skye mched*); and (4) the activity field in which there is neither perception nor its absence (Skt., *naivasamjñānasamjñāyatana*; Tib., *'du shes med 'du shes med min skye mched*). This highest of all samsaric realms is also called *bhagavra* or “Peak of Experience.”

²³As we have seen, all Buddhist systems warn that the transpersonal experiences of the summit of the sensual realm (Skt., *kamadhatu* or *kama loka*; Tib., *dod pa'i khams*), of the form realm (Skt., *rupadhatu* or *rupa loka*; Tib., *gzugs khams*), or of any of the four formless realms (Skt., *arupadhatu* or *arupa loka*; Tib., *gzugs med kyi khams*) are within *samsara* and constitute spurious achievements that, if mistaken for Awakening, will result in an exacerbation of delusion in an expanded ego experience (in fact, Shakyamuni left his two successive teachers and set to seek for Awakening without external guides because he realized they did not go beyond samsaric realms, and yet posited their relative, conditioned obtainments as the highest realization). In their turn, Dzogchen and *Ch'an* or *Zen* go even beyond, for they further warn against mistaking for *nirvana* or Awakening the transpersonal state the Dzogchen teachings call *kunzhi*, which may involve deep *nirodha* absorptions or *samadhis* in which neither *samsara* nor *nirvana* are active. Furthermore, the Dzogchen teachings warn that dwelling in this condition is like cutting one's own neck.

²⁴This tingsel may manifest in some specific meditative absorptions; it may also manifest in the *chikai* bardo (*'chi ka'i bar do*), which is the first bardo to arise after death; and it may manifest when luminosity shines after falling asleep. (The bardos are not states of realization; an explanation of the term “bardo” is provided in a subsequent note.)

²⁵There are different manifestations of luminosity; for a brief explanation of these, see Capriles (2000a, 2003, and in particular work in progress 1). However, only when their true condition is reGnized, are they manifestations of realization.

²⁶The bardos (*bar do*) are the six (or four) intermediate states samsaric beings transit through (even thought

some of them are either states in which neither *samsara* nor *nirvana* are manifest, or comprise such states). No bardo whatsoever may correspond to *nirvana*; for *nirvana* to manifest the experiences that manifest in any of the six (or four) bardos have to be reGnized.

²⁷As we have seen, what the Dzogchen teachings call the Base is the true condition of the whole of *samsara*, *nirvana* and the neutral condition of the base-of-all or *kunzhi* (*kun gzhi*); therefore, the summit of *samsara*, just as all other possible states that may manifest as a result of the aforementioned three possible functionings, is in truth the Base—which therefore cannot be contrasted to that summit. However, the point is that the Base is not called “the Summit,” but “the Base,” and that there are most precise reasons for this—which are betrayed when the Base is represented as the Summit of a hierarchy, holoarchy or however we may like to call our hierarchical classifications.

²⁸He did so at least until very recently; though I believe he has continued to do so, I must acknowledge I have not read all that Wilber has written.

²⁹In Wilber (1996, pp. 72-73), we are told:

At first I thought [the holoarchical] maps [from different traditions, times and places] were all referring to the same territory, so to speak. I thought they were all different versions of an essentially similar holoarchy. There were just too many similarities and overlaps in all of them. So by comparing and contrasting them all, I thought I might be able to find the single and basic holoarchy that they were all trying to represent in their own ways.

The more I tried this, the more it became obvious that it wouldn't work. These various holoarchies had some undeniable similarities, but they differed in certain profound ways, and the exact nature of these differences was not obvious at all. And most confusing of all, in some of these holoarchical maps, the holons got *bigger* as development progressed, and in others, they became *smaller* (I didn't yet understand that evolution produces greater depth, less span). It was a real mess, and at several points I decided to just chuck it, forget it, because nothing was coming out of this research.

But the more I looked at these various holoarchies, the more it dawned on me that there were actually *four very different types* of holoarchies, four very different types of holistic sequences. As you say, I don't think this had been spotted before—perhaps because it was so stupidly simple; at any event it was news to me. But once I put all of these holoarchies into these four groups—and they instantly fell into place at that point—then it was very obvious that each holoarchy in each group was

indeed dealing with the same territory, but overall we had four different territories, so to speak.

Of all hierarchical schemas, the only one I admit is the one discussed in the immediately following note.

³⁰I have shown why the intellectual constructs of the sciences cannot correspond exactly to what they interpret, and why all scientific interpretations of reality, insofar as they are posited as the exact, objective description of a self-existent, objective reality, are ideological constructs. Likewise, I have sided with Desiderius Erasmus (1984) and Herbert Marcuse (1964, ch. 6), among others of those—modern or ancient—who view the prevailing scientific approach as being in itself pernicious, and have insisted that at the root of science lie an objectifying and fragmentary type of perception and a utilitarian type of intentionality that automatically lead to the development of technology and of mechanistic views. While I have insisted that this does not imply that we should do away with the sciences, I have also insisted that our problems will not be solved (as some of the advocates of the famed “New Paradigm” preached in the eighties and nineties) merely by replacing the mechanistic outlook of the sciences for a holistic one while keeping the current mentality (Capriles, 1994, 2004, work in progress 1). In fact, my view is that for survival to be perhaps possible a revolution in the human psyche must radically change the perception and the intentionality behind both science and technology, so as to radically transform their nature, making them collaborate with the ecosystem rather than devastate it and destroy it (which is roughly in agreement with Marcuse’s [1972] view).

In the original note to the chapter of Capriles (work in progress 1) that served as the basis for this paper, I pointed out that I fully agree with Wilber that if we are to apply “scientific models” to different systems in the universe—such as physical, biological, human, social and so on—it is most important to switch models according to the level of complexity and the structure and function of the level we are dealing with. I also noted that Wilber (1982, 1996) criticized the so-called “new paradigm” precisely for failing to do so.

In fact, as shown in Capriles (1994), it would be erroneous, dehumanizing and pernicious to understand those phenomena involving human consciousness in terms of models and concepts that apply to, say, the physical level, or the biological level, or other levels, and try to produce a scientific universal theory for explaining indistinctly the phenomena of all different “levels.” (In the original note I argued for this view using quotations from Feyerabend [1984/1987, p. 11], Ervin Laszlo [1974, pp. 29-31], and Walter Buckley [1970/1993, pp. 13-14]. I used De Sousa Santos [1987/1988, p. 37] to illustrate the error in question,

commenting that the reductionism involved could go as far as in John Lilly [1987]; then I made reference to the polemic between T. H. Huxley [1887] and Piotr Alekseyevich Kropotkin [1976] concerning the motor of evolution—and, finally, I pointed out that Niklas Luhmann’s systemic, autopoietic theory of society, which was criticized in Capriles & Hocevar [1991, 1992] and whose aims I compared to those of B. F. Skinner’s [1975], show that the application of systems theories based on the concept of self-organization will not be helpful unless the revolution of the psyche referred to above is achieved.)

³¹All that was expressed in note 27 applies here again.

³²I am not referring to phenomenology in the narrow twentieth century European sense of the term, but to what I have referred to as a “metaphenomenology,” which is not limited to analyzing samsaric ontological structures while keeping the phenomenological *epoché*, but which also involves the analysis of *nirvana*, which is beyond appearances (phenomena) and ontological structures, and of the relationship between *samsara* and *nirvana*.

When I say “ontological,” I am referring to what I have referred to as a “metaontology,” which is the correct ontology developed by those who have undergone the dissolution in *nirvana* of the phenomenon of being, and who therefore have a correct understanding that being is a most basic delusive phenomenon of *samsara*.

³³However, we should not think that all conditioned experience should be placed on the same footing. For example, according to the Dzogchen teachings, the perception of one’s body (and ideally of the whole universe) as a magical illusion, an apparition, a phantom or a hologram, as achieved in the Tantric practice of the illusory body, despite being conditioned, is more correct than the one featuring the perception of one’s body and the universe as concrete, self-existing realities. Similarly, the experience of the post-Contemplation stage of the *arya bodhisattva* of the Mahayana in the path of Seeing and the path of Contemplation (the third and fourth paths in the career of the *bodhisattva*), wherein the relative is perceived (to a greater or lesser degree) as being on the same status as an illusion or a mirage, despite being conditioned is more correct than the perception characteristic of deluded beings who have not entered the Path.

Nonetheless, since the above states are still conditioned by delusion, they are not in the same footing as what the Dzogchen teachings call Dzogchen *qua* Path and Dzogchen *qua* Fruit.

³⁴What Jean Gebser called “aperspectival freedom” (Gebser, 1986), deriving from the fact that one no longer privileges any point of view over the plethora of other viewpoints at one’s disposal, can only result from what

Madhyamika Prasangika master Chandrakirti called “not having own-mind,” and which has also been called “not affirming anything from one’s own heart” and “not making self-directed or interior-directed assertions” (Tib., *rang rgyud du khes len pa*)—which implies only making “other-directed” or “exterior-directed assertions” (Tib., *gzhan ngo khas len*). “To have own mind,” “to affirm from one’s heart,” or “to make self-directed / interior-directed assertions” was the same as “to have theses of one’s own:” to take as true whatever one thinks or asserts without intending to deceive others, and to take the contrary of this as false. Therefore, “not to have own mind” or its synonyms expressed an essential trait of fully realized individuals, for, insofar as they are utterly free from the delusory valuation of concepts and other thoughts, they do not take anything they say as being absolutely true or false: whatever they say arises beyond delusory valuation as the spontaneous function of Awakening that naturally leads beings beyond *samsara*. The following is from Capriles (2005):

There are abundant source quotes from Nagarjuna, Aryadeva and Chandrakirti asserting that Madhyamikas have no theses or system of their own (for a list of such source quotes, cf. Wayman, Alex, 1978, Indian ed. 1979, pp. 288-289). One of the best known such quotes is the one often taken from Nagarjuna’s *Vigrahavyavartanikarika*: “If I had any thesis then I would have that fault. Since I have no thesis, I am utterly faultless.”

Does this mean that Nagarjuna never asserted anything? In his texts he explicitly said that there was Awakening, that bodhisattvas proceeded along a Path, etc. Furthermore, his statement in the above stanza that he had no thesis was itself an assertion. Tsongkhapa’s interpretation was that in the above stanza and similar ones the scope of the negation was limited. However, Nagarjuna asserted he had no thesis because, as we have seen, fully Awake individuals, no matter what they assert, have no ‘own mind’: being free from grasping at thoughts, whenever they affirm that there is Awakening, that bodhisattvas proceed along a Path—or that they make no assertions, for that matter—they do not adhere to the idea they are asserting, which arises solely for leading beings along the Path. And the same is the case with the assertions they are forced to make upon facing different life situations; for example, upon being asked what were his family’s caste and his place of birth, most likely Nagarjuna would have replied he was born a Brahmin in Berar—and if asked about his religion, surely he would have said he was a Buddhist. However, being free from grasping at thoughts, he would not have experienced this as

being absolutely or truly so—and if someone spoke evil of Brahmins from Berar, or of Buddhists, he would not have felt ‘touched in the heart’ by the words spoken by that person and thus would not have felt to the least offended. On the basis of the views Tsongkhapa expressed in this regard, Elizabeth Napper tells us (Napper, 2003, p. 118):

Even if one, trying to be free from assertions, says that all presentations are only from others’ point of view, this too is illogical, for even saying that much is an assertion, and thus one is not free from assertions.’ (In this regard, cf. Wayman, Alex, 1978, Indian ed. 1979, pp. 288 and 296.)

Since Nagarjuna was not a mindless person who went around contradicting himself, but a realized individual, he could not have understood the phrase ‘being free from assertions’ in the sense that one should refrain from making statements such as ‘If I had any thesis then I would have that fault; since I have no thesis, I am utterly faultless’—for, had he harbored the belief that one should not utter words that may be understood as assertions, he would not have written this stanza. The only plausible interpretation of the stanza is the one Chandrakirti summed up when he asserted followers of *Madhyamaka* should not have ‘own mind’, hold theses ‘from the heart’, or make ‘interior-directed’ / ‘self-directed’ assertions: *Madhyamaka* arose as a means for leading beings to Awakening, and only fully Awake Ones are true Madhyamikas, for only fully Awake Ones, upon making assertions, at no point whatsoever have ‘own mind’, hold theses ‘from the heart’, or make ‘interior-directed’ or ‘self-directed’ assertions—which means that they never take them to be absolutely true or false, as deluded beings always do.

Since, as we have seen, ‘other-directed’ or ‘exterior-directed’ assertions are those which are made without believing them to be true, the lies told by ordinary beings belong to this category. However, when ordinary beings speak, independently of whether they ‘lie’ or ‘say the truth’, their assertions are totally incorrect, in the sense that they are a function of delusion—and whatever is thought or said under delusion is incorrect, for delusion is itself incorrectness. The point is that, since they cannot avoid grasping at their own thoughts and assertions, ordinary beings wrongly take their ‘interior-directed’ assertions to be absolutely true, and wrongly take their lies to be totally untrue: being deluded, in contradiction with *Prajñāparamita Sūtras* like the *Vajracchedika* and with *Madhyamika* thought, they

take forms to be either existent or nonexistent, and if they take something to be existent they will perceive themselves as lying if they say it is nonexistent (and vice-versa): this is the reason why all they say is incorrect, and it is also the reason why, if they assert what they believe to be untrue while being connected to a polygraph, the machine will detect a lie. Contrariwise, whatever the Buddhas say, being always ‘other-directed’ or ‘exterior-directed’, is totally correct, for insofar as they are totally free from grasping at thoughts (and thus utterly undeceived and free from the power of conventional truth—which, as Gendün Chöphel shows [2005], is ‘deluded truth’), they do not experience their assertions as being either true or false: they do not take forms as being either existent or nonexistent. Therefore, if they assert something and immediately negate it, in neither case will the polygraph register a lie: this is the reason why the *Maharatnakutasutra*, quoted in Chöphel (2005), says, ‘Existence and nonexistence contradict each other; pure and impure also contradict each other; because of contradiction, suffering cannot be calmed; when contradiction is no more, suffering comes to an end.’ In fact, ‘surpassing contradiction’ does not mean ‘never asserting the opposite of whatever one affirmed in the past’; it means going beyond the grasping that causes one to perceive a contradiction in making contradictory assertions, and that hence causes the polygraph to detect a lie when one of the two contradictory assertions is made.

In fact, insofar as the assertions made by Awake Ones are part of the spontaneous activities whereby they lead beings to Awakening, upon making them they (are) totally beyond action, beyond intention, beyond self-consciousness and beyond judging in terms of right or wrong. In the *Bodhicharyavatara* we read (Shantideva, 1996, p. 126): “[Objection] How can there exist a liberated being?

[*Madhyamika*] He is false imagination in the mind of another, but he does not exist because of conventional truth on his own part. After something has been established it exists; if not, it does not exist even as conventional truth.’

The above means that Buddhists who lived at the time of Shakyamuni through their false imagination perceived Shakyamuni as a Buddha, but Shakyamuni, who was not subject to false imagination, did neither perceive himself as a Buddha, nor perceive others as deluded sentient beings; therefore, in all that he asserted there was no own-mind, and

therefore his assertions were of the type that has been called ‘other-directed’ (though, as will be shown below, this term is not really precise)...

The stanzas by Shantideva coincide with Jigme Lingpa’s assertion that, though Buddhist sentient beings may perceive Buddhas as carrying out countless activities in their behalf, Buddhas perceive no beings that must be helped, and harbor no intentions to help beings. The point is that, since Buddhas are free from grasping at the threefold thought-structure (Tib., *’khor gsum*), whatever they do is an instance of what is called ‘action and fruit [of action] devoid of the concept of the three spheres’ (*’khor gsum rnam par mi rtog pa’i las dang ’bras bu*): from their own standpoint they are beyond activity—and yet sentient beings, if they are devout Buddhists and are able to recognize the Buddhas as such, see the latter as carrying out countless activities in their behalf. This is why the terms ‘other-directed’ and ‘exterior-directed’ do not categorize the actionless activities of the Buddhas precisely: Buddhas perceive no others and no exterior, and therefore, although for lack of a better term we call their assertions ‘other-directed’ or ‘exterior-directed’, in truth these belong to a category different from that of the ‘exterior-directed’ or ‘other-directed’ assertions made by sentient beings—which are the lies they say—and properly speaking should not be referred to by the same words. And this is also why ‘purpose’ is a term that does not apply to the Buddhas.

In turn, superior bodhisattvas (which are those in the third and fourth *bodhisattva* paths, or, what is the same, those ranging between the first and tenth levels [Skt., *bhumi*; Tib., *sa*]) have no ‘own mind’ and hold no theses ‘from the heart’ while they are in the state of Contemplation (Skt., *samahita*; Tib., *mnyam bzhaq*), but they do so again while in the state of post-Contemplation (Skt., *prishthalabdha*; Tib., *rjes thob*), in which grasping at thought has been reactivated. However, as they advance on the Path, delusion is progressively neutralized, and so the strength of grasping at thoughts in the state of post-Contemplation is progressively mitigated—which implies that the strength of the delusive appearances that manifest in that state diminishes. Furthermore, having experientially realized, while in the Contemplation state, that the illusions resulting from grasping at thought are mere illusions, while in the post-Contemplation state they maintain some awareness of this fact—which is why the relative truth that manifests in this state is called ‘correct rel-

ative truth' (Skt., *tathyasamvritisatya*; Tib., *yang dag pa'i kun rdzob bden pa*). Therefore, in this state they posit theses that are mainly 'other-directed' or 'exterior-directed', but that to a great extent are also 'interior-directed' (and, in fact, in order to continue on the Path they still need to believe that there is a final Buddhahood and a means to proceed toward it, as well as a series of *dharmas* truths to be admitted); therefore, the conceptual positions they adopt are to a great extent correct.

Finally, bodhisattvas who have not yet reached the third *bodhisattva* path (or, what is the same, the first level) and who therefore have never gone beyond the state of 'inverted / incorrect relative truth' (Skt., *mithyasamvritisatya*; Tib., *log pa'i kun rdzob bden pa*) in which there is no awareness of the illusion-like character of phenomena, in order to lead both themselves and others to Awakening, must posit from the heart theses that as such are wholly 'self-directed' or 'interior-directed': they must posit from the heart all that is written in canonical sources having definitive meaning (but do not have to do likewise with what is written in sources of provisional meaning, for in the case of the latter they have to ascertain the true import of the text and then posit from the heart what they have ascertained).

As we have seen, the Prasangikas and the original Madhyamikas (such as Nagarjuna and Aryadeva), rather than positing autonomous theses and syllogisms, used the procedure of *reductio ad absurdum* in order to refute the views of others. Therefore, they made fewer assertions than adherents of other philosophical schools. However, when Nagarjuna said he made no assertions, and Chandrakirti said one should not have 'own mind' and therefore should not posit theses 'from the heart' (i.e., theses that are self-directed or interior-directed), they did not mean one should not speak, but that whatever a true *Madhyamika* (i.e., a realized individual) may assert is of the kind that, for lack of a better term, I am calling other-directed / exterior-directed. Therefore, though a sub-school such as *Mahamadhyamaka*, for example, laid out a complex interpretation of reality and its functionality, realized masters of this school may rightly say they do not posit theses of their own, insofar as they do not do so with own-mind—or, what is the same, they do not do so in an interior-directed or self-directed way. Hence it is not correct to think that only the Prasangikas or Consequentialists and the original Madhyamikas made no statements from the heart (or, what is the same, made no interior-directed

assertions), and that this was so because they abstained from positing autonomous theses and from resorting to autonomous syllogisms. As we have seen, whether assertions are other-directed/exterior-directed, self-directed/interior-directed, or partly self-directed/interior-directed and partly other-directed/exterior-directed, depends on the spiritual status of the individual who is making the assertions, and thus when Awake Ones posit autonomous theses and use autonomous syllogisms they are not making statements from the heart (or, what is the same, they are not making interior-directed or self-directed assertions), for they do so utterly beyond grasping at thoughts and words. The *Sutra of Hui-neng* reads (Wong-Mou-Lam, 1969, p. 99):

Whenever an individual puts a question to you, answer him or her in antonyms, so that a pair of opposites will be formed, such as coming and going. When the interdependence of the two is entirely done away with there would be, in the absolute sense, neither coming nor going.'

Does the above mean that replying to someone in antonyms will cause that person to become unable to move at all, and therefore he or she will not be able to either come or go? Except in the case of beings under hypnosis, words cannot result in paralysis, and at any rate the activities of Buddhas do not have the function of inducing paralysis. So when the text says that there will be neither coming nor going, what it is saying is the same Nagarjuna meant when he said he made no assertions: though there will still be what deluded beings perceive as going and coming and what they perceive as making assertions, and the Awake individual will be able to speak of going and coming or of making assertions, he or she will not perceive going or coming, or the making of assertions—and if he or she speaks about such things it will be solely in an other-directed way, without giving rise to own-mind.

Likewise, when Ashvagoshā stated that we must use words [and concepts] in order to go beyond words [and concepts] (Asvagoshā, 2003), he certainly did not mean that the purpose of teaching the *dharmas* was to become mute and unable to think, but that listening and studying, and then reflecting on what we had listened and studied, were the first two of the three steps in the development of the *Prajñāparamita* that is the essence of the Path leading to the eradication of grasping at thoughts, and therefore leading to the eradication of 'own mind' and of interior-directed assertions.

The essence of the excerpt of the Buddhist text

quoted above lies in the fact that, whenever necessary, Awake Ones may assert the very opposite of what their interlocutors believe from the heart, and even prove it logically to them, not in order to lead them to adhere to the opposite idea, but to shatter their own-mind, thereby leading them beyond adherence to all positions, into the grasping-free condition in which the Awake Ones find themselves. This may involve asserting any of the four extremes—nonexistent, not-nonexistent, both-existent-and-nonexistent, and neither-existent-nor non-existent—but, at any rate, without the slightest trace of own-mind. Therefore, true Prasangikas agree that all four extremes are valid insofar as they can be validly asserted if this is demanded by syllogistic logic and/or direct perception; for example, all entities may be said to exist insofar as they produce effects, but may be said not to exist insofar as they have no self-nature or substance; all physical entities may be said to be units insofar as the concept in terms of which we understand them refers to the unity of a configuration (Skt., *lakshana*; Tib., *mtshan dpe*), but all physical entities may be said to not to be units insofar as they may be found to be made of parts; etc. (Gregory Vlastos has rejected arguments of this kind on the grounds that the oneness and the multiplicity of an entity are not mutually exclusive features, and therefore that the multiplicity of what we consider as being a unit, does not contradict its oneness and therefore does not imply it is not a unit [Vlastos, 1961/1968]. However, when a deluded being recognizes and apprehends an entity, he or she perceives that entity as being exclusively and absolutely one [i.e., as being a unit], and there is no comprehension whatsoever in the deluded mind of the fact that the entity also is a multiplicity. If then the same individual mentally decomposes the entity, he or she will perceive it as a multiplicity, and there will be no understanding whatsoever in the deluded mind of the fact that this multiplicity also is a unit. This does not mean that the right thing to do is to say that the entity is both one and multiple, which if left unexplained would violate the law of the excluded middle [or law of the excluded third, or principle of non-contradiction], would not clarify anything, and would be but another conceptual position, contrary to saying that the entity is neither one nor multiple, and equally true and equally false as the latter [it would seemingly clarify things if we said that relatively the entity is one when viewed from one standpoint and multiple when seen from another, but that it cannot be said to be either absolutely one

or absolutely multiple; however, this would be but another conceptual position which, if grasped at, would give rise to just another instance of delusion—and in this regard would be like Tsongkhapa's qualification of the existence to be negated as inherent and of the nonexistence to be rejected as utter]. I have dealt with this problem in further detail in Capriles [2004], where logic is criticized in terms of Gödel's theorem, of Bateson's criticism of Russell and Whitehead's *Principia Mathematica*, etc.). However, grasping at any of the extremes (as deluded beings always do) is incorrect insofar as it implies believing one concept to be true and its opposite to be untrue; for example, if we believe in existence we take nonexistence to be untrue and vice-versa, and if we believe in the oneness of physical entities we take their plurality to be untrue and vice-versa—which is wrong because, as we have just seen, one concept will apply just as much as the opposite if we merely switch perspective. (Furthermore, it would not do to say that the existence that applies to entities is 'mere existence' and that the nonexistence that applies to them is the 'absence of inherent existence', or that the oneness that applies to physical entities is the one we perceive in direct perception and the multiplicity that applies to physical entities is the one that we infer upon analysis, for by so saying we would sustain own-mind, or, what is the same, we would continue to grasp at concepts—and, as we have seen, the essence of the Consequentialist or *Prasangika* method lies in pulling the conceptual carpet under the mind's feet so that it may fall into a state beyond concepts and, especially, beyond own-mind.) To conclude, it may be reiterated that Awake Ones are correct when they assert any of the extremes, for, as we have seen so many times, they do so without own-mind. The meaning of the terms 'valid', 'incorrect' and 'correct' in the Consequentialist or *Prasangika* system is as established in this paragraph—the last two terms being defined solely by the presence or absence of own-mind.

³⁵In fact, Wilber has studied the *Atiyoga*-Dzogchen under Penor (*Pad nor: Pad ma Nor bu*) Rinpoche, the current head of the Nyingmapa School of Tibetan Buddhism.

³⁶In Capriles (1977), I presented the diagram of a "spiral of spirals," which was an elaboration on Ronald D. Laing's diagram of the "spiral of pretences" (Laing, 1961). In it, it seemed that from the level wherein the anguish that is the being of the human individual is fully experienced (which in this sense would seem to correspond to Wilber's six fulcrum), one proceeded to the realization of the *nir-*

manakaya, and then from it to the successive realizations of the *sambhogakaya* and the *dharmakaya*. Therefore, an error could be appreciated that was partly similar to the one I am criticizing in Wilber; however, in my diagram this level was represented as the very bottom of *samsara*, and was not said to involve the “integration of body and mind” Wilber posits in relation to it.

³⁷If, as Nubchen Sangye Yeshe (*gNubs chen Sangs rgyas Ye shes*) affirmed in the *Samten Migdrön* (*bSam gtan Mig sgron*), the Dzogchen *Atiyoga* is the “universal ancestor of all vehicles,” and if I am right in inferring from this and from the stories of the origins of the Tantras of the Path of transformation that the latter and other vehicles derive from it, then there will be no doubt that the original understanding of the kayas and their progression is the one we find in Dzogchen texts, and that the inner *Vajrayana* Tantras of the Path of transformation had to modify that explanation and invert that progression in order to satisfy people of the capacities these texts were intended to cater to.

³⁸Nubchen Sangye Yeshe (*gNubs chen Sangs rGyas Ye shes*), *Samten Migdrön* (*bSam gtan Mig sgron*).

³⁹However, from all this we must not infer that in order to undertake the practice of Dzogchen *Atiyoga* it is first necessary to practice the Inner *Vajrayana* Tantras of the Path of transformation until we attain its highest level of realization of this vehicle: Dzogchen *Ati* is a self-contained Path featuring most powerful methods of Awakening, all of which are based on the principle of spontaneous liberation rather than on that of transformation, and many of which allow the individual to obtain Direct Introduction [roughly equivalent to a first *satori*] without having to spend years practicing the stages of creation and completion or perfection.

⁴⁰Concerning Wilber’s wording at this point, it seems relevant to note that the dissolution of the “separate-self sense” is not something that a person can *do* but something that *happens*, for all actions affirm and sustain the illusory mental subject.

⁴¹For a list and an explanation of the four formless absorptions (*arupa-samadhi*), see note 16 to this paper.

⁴²It is the Madhyamaka Prasangika school and the schools of the Inner Madhyamaka that emphasize the fact that the absolute truth is disclosed in a gnosis beyond the subject-object duality that makes patent the true nature of phenomena (Skt., *dharmata*; Tib., *chos nyid*), showing phenomena to be utterly void of self-nature (and, according to the Inner Madhyamaka, showing this gnosis to be void of anything extraneous to itself). The Inner Madhyamaka explains the absolute truth as the indivisibility of appearances and voidness (this is the Mahamadhyamika definition), and identifies it with the Buddha-nature. See the upcoming revised version of Capriles (2004).

⁴³Kierkegaard (1968, 1970) seems to have placed in the same footing the fear that may be inspired by awareness of one’s own nothingness (which seems to be an instance of what I call *panic*), and all modes of despair, *Angst*, etc.

⁴⁴The realizations involving a special mode of death are: (1) the rainbow body (*dja lus*) in the Dzogchen Longde (*klong sde*) series of teachings; (2) the body of atoms (*lus rdul phran du dengs*) in the Tekchö (*khregs chod*) level of the Menngagde (*man ngag sde*) or *Upadeshavarga* series, and (3) the body of light (*’od kyi sku* or *’od phung*) in the Thögel (*thod rgal*) level of the Menngagde or *Upadeshavarga* series. The realization involving deathlessness is the total transference (*’pho ba chen po*), which is the highest possible realization of the practice of Thögel.

⁴⁵The latter includes those experiences of voidness that some lower Mahayana systems wrongly posit as absolute truth, such as the presence of the absence of the mode of existence we had wrongly projected on an entity, as it is supposed to manifest in the realization of the practice of insight meditation (Pali, *vipassana*; Skt., *vipashyana*; Tib., *lhag mthong*; Chin., *kuan*) taught in the *Sandhinirmochana Sutra*, the *Shravakabhumi* chapter of Asanga’s *Yogacharabhumi* and the *Bhavanakrama* by Shantarakshita and Kamalashila—for, as I have noted elsewhere (Capriles, 2004, 2005), insofar as it manifests as object to a mental subject and therefore involves the subject-object duality and the dualistic negation of the mode of existence that samsaric beings wrongly project on entities, such a voidness is dual, relative and samsaric.

The original realization of absolute truth of the *Madhyamika* Prasangikas was “the ultimate meaning without distinctions,” “the ultimate meaning which is not conventional,” “the inexpressible ultimate,” or “the true absolute that is nonconceptual (Tib., *rnam grangs min pa’i don dam*):” the direct realization without elaborations (Tib., *spros bral*) of the *dharmata* or true condition of all phenomena that can only take place beyond the subject-object duality and in general beyond all concepts “when the conceptual carpet is pulled under the mind’s feet,” and in which, therefore, there is no one who may abide anywhere or on anything—which is the reason why in ancient times the *Madhyamika*-Prasangikas were referred to by the label “Thoroughly Nonabiding Madhyamikas” (Skt., *sarvadharmapratisthanavadin*; Tib., *rab tu mi gnas par smra ba*). Je Tsongkhapa disparaged this label together with the original *Prasangika* view and posited as the absolute truth of *Madhyamaka Prasangika* the voidness that manifests as object in the practice described in the texts listed in the above paragraph, by simply redefining this voidness in terms he deemed to correspond to the *Madhyamaka-Prasangika* (Capriles, 2005); therefore, Je Tsongkhapa’s voidness is also

included among the “experiences that some lower Mahayana systems wrongly posit as absolute truth” referred to above.

⁴⁶Illusory experiences or *nyam* (*nyams*) of lack of thought and so on are like reflections in a mirror rather than being the naked patency of the true condition of the awareness that is compared with the mirror. The same applies to the perception that entities do not exist in the way in which they appear to exist—which, besides, is a delusive, samsaric result of the delusory valuation of concepts (those interpreting the entities, those of existence and nonexistence, and so on). However, all such experiences may have value on the Path, in particular if used as an occasion for applying the instructions that may permit the reGnition of the true condition of the awareness represented by the mirror.

In fact, realization in Dzogchen consists in the naked patency of the true condition of the primordial awareness that is compared with the mirror, rather than consisting in any of the “reflections” (i.e., experiences) that may manifest in the mirror—whether these be ordinary experiences of *samsara* such as that of phenomena as existing, or experiences of the practice such as the illusory experiences or *nyam* [*nyams*] of voidness, clarity or pleasure. In fact, *the essential difference between transpersonal systems and what I call metatranspersonal ones is that whereas the former take the production of transpersonal experiences to be an end in itself, the latter use these experiences in order to apply the instructions that may result in the reGnition of the true condition of what is represented by the mirror.*

In the primordial, nondual awareness in question, appearances and voidness are indivisible, for neither side is or may be privileged. In the Dzogchen teachings, when this nondual awareness is manifest as Dzogchen *qua* Path or Dzogchen *qua* Fruit, it is called “all-liberating single gnosis” or *chikshe kundrol* (*gcig shes kun grol*), for whatever concepts manifest in it—whether of “existent phenomena” or of “nonexistence”—spontaneously liberate themselves.

⁴⁷In the practice of Tekchö (*khregs chod*) of the *Upadeshavarga* series of Dzogchen teachings, the voidness that, as seen at the beginning of this paper, is the *ngowo* aspect of the Base, is realized upon the reGnition of the true condition of the *dang* form of manifestation of energy, which is the basic constituent of thoughts. That very moment whatever delusorily valued thought may be manifest liberates itself spontaneously; since this applies also to the super-subtle thought known as the “threefold thought-structure,” the delusory valuation of which gives rise to the illusory subject-object duality, the duality of subject and object instantly dissolves. This is why in the practice of *Atiyoga*-Dzogchen (and in particular in the practice of the Tekchö of the Dzogchen Menngagde) the realization of voidness in the manifestation of *rigpa* necessarily implies the

dissolution of the illusory subject-object duality.

Moreover, as I showed in Capriles (2005) and as will be seen in the regular text of this paper, the original *Madhyamaka* agreed with the Dzogchen teachings in asserting that the realization of voidness in the manifestation of absolute truth is beyond the illusory subject-object duality—which some have related to the already allegation by Pawo Tsuglag Threngwa (*dPa' bo gTsug lag Phreng ba* [1504-1566]) in *Feast for the Erudite: A History of the Dharma* or *Chöjung Khepai Gatön* (*Chos 'byung mkhas pa's dga' ston*) according to which both Nagarjuna and Aryadeva were accomplished Dzogchen Masters, but which need not be related to this fact, for true realization is always beyond the subject-object duality. At any rate, it is most important to distinguish the realization of voidness upon the reGnition of the Base that privileges its *ngowo* (*ngo bo*) or “essence” aspect and the *dang* (*gdangs*) form of manifestation of energy, from the mere experiences of voidness that manifest on the Path, and which are instances of true realization only when they coincide with the reGnition of the Base.

⁴⁸The dissolution of the observer shows that the observer was void: that it was but an appearance that can dissolve without this affecting our Gnitiveness or the appearance of the myriad forms that manifest through the senses.

⁴⁹I inverted the order of the paragraphs in the quotation, for the last two paragraphs in my citation correspond to the first paragraph and the beginning of the second paragraph of Wilber's reply in the section “Enlightenment” in p. 236 of his book, whereas the first four paragraphs in my quotation are posterior in Wilber's book and appear in sequence in pp. 236-237.

⁵⁰It is the delusory valuation of the “threefold thought-structure” (Tib., *'khor gsum*) that gives rise to the subject-object duality and with it to the grasper and the grasped (Tib., *gzung 'dzin*), condition of possibility of grasping at appearances (*phyin ci log par 'dzin pa*). This delusory valuation is at the root of both what is known as overvaluation (Skt., *samaropa / adhyaropa*; Tib., *sgro 'dogs*), and what is known as undervaluation (Tib., *skur 'debs*).

⁵¹Though the Gelugpa School associates this *Sutra* with the *Yogachara* School, which is based solely on the Third Promulgation, the Nyingma School sees it as one of the most direct canonical sources of the *Mahamadhyamaka* School, which they view as the supreme philosophical school of the Mahayana and which is based both on the Second and Third Promulgations. The italics are my own and the terminology was adapted to the one used in this paper.

⁵²Despite the fact that all *Madhyamaka Swatantrika* subschools are supposed to be based on the original, generic *Madhyamika* texts by Nagarjuna and

Aryadeva, we have seen that some of the lower subschools comprised in this category have meditations treatises that posit a realization of absolute truth involving the subject-object duality. However, as shown by the verses by *Prasangika* Master Shantideva quoted below in the regular text, the original *Madhyamaka Prasangika* subschool makes it clear that the realization of absolute truth cannot involve such duality. (We have seen that Je Tsongkhapa, on the basis of the insight practice taught in the *Bhavanakramas* of the lower *Madhyamaka-Swatantrika-Yogachara* subschool, posited as the absolute truth of the *Prasangika* one involving the subject-object duality; however, all Red-Hat Schools disagree that this is the absolute truth of the original *Prasangikas*, who are the Thoroughly Nonabiding *Madhyamikas* [cf. note 34 to this paper]; furthermore, as noted elsewhere in this paper, the Gelugpas in general admit that the Fruit is characterized by a nondual gnosis utterly free from the subject-object schism, and that equivalent gnoses manifest on the Path as well. In this regard, cf. Capriles [2005].)

⁵³All objects, including the manifestation of voidness as object, are the sphere of activity of the seed of *samsara*, and thus could by no means be what, from an epistemological standpoint, may be rightly said to be the absolute truth that manifests in *nirvana* (and which, as we have seen, being what is not at all relative, cannot be an object of knowledge). By dwelling on an experience that belongs to the sphere of activity of the seed of cyclic existence, we sustain this very seed, and therefore our method, rather than leading beyond *samsara*, will sustain *samsara*.

⁵⁴The terminology was adapted to the one used in this paper.

⁵⁵The terminology was adapted to the one used in this paper.

⁵⁶There are many sources attesting this; for an example, cf. Williams (1998).

⁵⁷The terminology was adapted to the one used in this paper. The italics are my own.

⁵⁸Quoted in Dudjom Rinpoche, J. Y. D. (English 1991), vol. I, p. 276. The terminology was adapted to the one used in this paper, and the italics are my own.

⁵⁹The terminology was adapted to the one used in this paper, and the italics are my own.

⁶⁰The terminology was adapted to the one used in this paper, and the italics are my own.

⁶¹This is the reason why in the *Vimalakirti Nirdeśha Sutra* (Luk, 1972) different bodhisattvas strive to awaken a young female *bodhisattva* from her absorption, until finally a young and handsome though as yet inexperienced male *bodhisattva* succeeds in so doing. It is also the reason why the *Samadhiraja Sutra* insists that Awakening does not lie in dwelling in absorptions. And it is also the reason why

the *Sutra of Hui Neng* tells us (Wong-Mou-Lam, 1969, pp. 43-45; I modified the terminology in order to adapt it to the one used in this paper):

People under delusion believe obstinately in *dharmalakshana* (entities with collections of characteristics) and so they are stubborn in having their own way of interpreting the ‘*samadhi* of specific mode’, which they define as ‘sitting quietly and continuously without letting any idea arise in the mind’. Such an interpretation would rank us with inanimate objects, and is a stumbling block to the right Path which must be kept open. Should we free our mind from attachment to all ‘things’, the Path becomes clear; otherwise, we put ourselves under restraint. If that interpretation, ‘sitting quietly and continuously, etc.’ be correct, why on one occasion was Sariputra reprimanded by Vimalakirti for sitting quietly in the wood?

Learned audience, some teachers of meditation instruct their disciples to keep a watch on their mind for tranquility, so that it will cease from activity. Henceforth the disciples give up all exertion of mind. Ignorant persons become insane from having too much confidence in such instruction. Such cases are not rare, and it is a great mistake to teach others to do this...

To keep our mind free from defilement under all circumstances is called *wu-nien* (non-conceptuality). Our mind should stand aloof from circumstances, and on no account should we allow them to influence the function of our mind. But it is a great mistake to suppress our mind from all thinking; for even if we succeed in getting rid of all thoughts, and die immediately thereafter, still we shall be reincarnated elsewhere. Mark this, treaders of the Path. It is bad enough for a man to commit blunders from not knowing the meaning of the *dharmas*, but how much worse would it be to encourage others to follow suit? Being deluded, he sees not, and in addition he blasphemes the Buddhist Canon. Therefore we take *wu-nien* (non-conceptuality) as our object.

The above is the reason why the Dzogchen teachings compare dwelling in an absorption of cessation (*nirodha*) with “cutting one’s own head.”

⁶²This duality, however, is not to be taken too far. In the *Samkhya darśhana* of Kapila, which as we have seen is coupled with the *Yoga darśhana* of Patañjali, on the one hand what gives rise to the plurality of individual subjects (*ahamkara*) and individual objects (*tanmatrani*) is the cosmic spirit (*mahat*), which contains the potentiality for both *Purusha* and *Prakriti* to manifest. On the other hand, everything contains *Purusha* (in some level of development: it is

less developed in minerals, more so in plants, even more so in animals, and far more so in human beings) and *Prakriti*, which remain different, yet are never totally apart from each other. Furthermore, though all objects are reduced to a single *Prakriti*, whereas each subject is regarded as a different *Purusha*, ultimately all Purushas may also be reduced to a single universal spirit, which in the empirical individuals of the world has to contend with the manifold impediments of matter. Furthermore, the salvation of the Purushas, which lies in the aloofness of the *sakshin* before the movements of *Prakriti*, can only manifest thanks to the intervention of some specific mechanisms of *Prakriti*—and in general the wonderful ways in which the Purushas and *Prakriti* help each other show that the opposites fall within a whole. As the fact that the *ahamkaras* and the *tanmatrani* are somehow creations of the single *mahat* show, duality may seem to hang from some higher unity placed above itself.

In the book from which this paper was taken this note was much longer, but the above may suffice here.

⁶³German romantic poets such as Hölderlin and Novalis were among those who claimed that the absolute transcends subjectivity and that it is impossible to conceptualize it in a philosophical system. In Capriles (2005), I wrote:

In relation to and in the context of Idealism, Western philosophers raised the famous objection according to which an absolute could not be an absolute of knowledge, for the object of knowledge and the subject of knowledge are relative to each other (arguments of this kind are found, among other authors, in Bradley [1846-1924], who insisted [Bradley, 1978] that the absolute necessarily had to be nonrelational and free from the subject-object duality). Furthermore, knowledge is an understanding in terms of concepts, and concepts are defined by *genus proximum* or proximate gender (the immediately wider gender in which the class is included) and *differentiam specificam* or specific difference (that which sets the class apart from other members of the same gender); for example, if we admitted the well-known definition of ‘human being’ as a ‘rational animal’, ‘animal’ would be the *genus proximum* and ‘rational’ the *differentiam specificam*. Therefore, all concepts are relative to those that make up their proximate genus and those that make up their specific difference, and insofar as these in their turn are relative to other concepts that are relative to other concepts, all concepts are relative to the whole galaxy of concepts. The concept of ‘absolute’, in particular, is defined by *differentiam specificam* (i.e., by contrast) with that of ‘relative’, so that, in tautological terms, ‘absolute’ may be defined precisely as ‘that

which is not relative’ (this is the sense in which the term ‘absolute’ is used in *Madhyamaka* philosophy and in F. H. Bradley [1978]; in common language, the term has also other acceptations; e.g., “absolute” alcohol is 100% alcohol). This implies that the true absolute cannot be the concept of absolute that is relative to the concept of relative—or any other concept, for that matter—but must be the utterly non-conceptual true nature of all reality, which can only be realized in a nonconceptual gnosis beyond the subject-object duality. This is the reason why voidness, understood as the presence of the absence of the mode of existence that deluded beings wrongly project on an entity and in terms of which they wrongly perceive it, could not be the absolute truth of Consequentialist or *Prasangika* Madhyamikas: voidness thus understood is relative, not only to the perceiving mind, but also to the entity of which it is supposed to be the voidness, to the mode of existence we had wrongly projected on that entity... and to all other entities and the mode of existence we had wrongly projected on them. How could the relative be the absolute truth?

⁶⁴The language was adapted to the terminology used in this paper, and the italics are my own.

⁶⁵Although the Dzogchen teachings posit a nondual awareness inherent in Dzogchen *qua* Base, and although some terms used in the Semde series of Dzogchen teachings are similar to those in the *Sutras* of the Third *Dharmachakra*, on the basis of which the *Yogachara* School developed, Dzogchen does not posit a “mind only” view like the one expressed by the Sanskrit term *Chittamatra* and its Tibetan equivalent, *Semtsam* (*sems tsam*). However, this should *not* be understood as implying that the Dzogchen teachings agree with Brahmanic views that posit a *sakshin* that is different and separate from all objects: the Dzogchen teachings compare the relationship between awareness and its contents to that between water and the reflections in it, and note that although the latter cannot be said to be the water, the water is not at a distance from them and they are not at a distance from the water. In short, appearances are neither the dualistic mind nor the nondual Gnitiveness that allows the mind to know, but on the other hand neither the mind nor the nondual awareness that allows the mind to know are separate or different from appearances. And, nonetheless, all phenomena are of one taste with the nature-of-mind or Base-awareness in which they manifest as in a mirror: *bodhichitta* is like the mirror, and the energy or thukje of *bodhichitta*, consisting of the plethora of phenomena, is like the reflections that arise in the mirror, which are not the mirror, but are not at a distance from the mirror’s reflective capacity and therefore are not external to the mirror or different

from it. This is the reason why, when we realize this nature-of-mind or Base-awareness in the manifestation of rigpa, the whole of phenomena have a single taste for us—and, contrariwise, if the whole of phenomena do not have a single taste for us, we are not in the state of rigpa. This is also why, unlike the *Yogachara* School, the Semde series of Dzogchen teachings assert that vision, sensory presentation or apparent phenomena (Tib., *snang ba*), whether in *samsara* or in *nirvana*, are always the play (Skt., *lila*; Tib., *rol pa*) or ornament (Tib., *rgyan*) of primordial *bodhichitta* (i.e., of the Base of both *samsara* and *nirvana*). And it is also directly related to the fact that the Semde series of Dzogchen teachings explains the samsaric perception of a seemingly external world as resulting from dividing the given into an apparently internal dimension (*dbyings*) and an apparently external dimension (*dbyings*), and then projecting (Tib., *rtsal*) a great deal of the appearances manifesting as the energy (Tib., *thugs rje*) of *bodhichitta* into the dimension that appears to be external, so that the phenomena of tsel energy appear to manifest outside the mirror.

After the end of the excerpt from Longchenpa to which the call for this note was appended, we read the following (Longchen Rabjam [Longchenpa], 1998, p. 85; the language was adapted to the terminology used in this paper):

‘Well’, you might ask, ‘aren’t you asserting everything to be mind?’ Let me clearly outline the distinction [between Mind-only and Dzogchen]. In general, when the world of appearances and possibilities, whether [as] *samsara* or *nirvana*, is explained to be Awake awareness, what is meant is that phenomena are alike [in that they do not waver from the single awareness] and manifest naturally as the display, dynamic energy and adornment of that awareness. [On the basis of this, phenomena have been said] to be mind, just as one uses the name ‘sun’ to refer to the rays of the sun when one says, ‘Sit in the midday sun’.

There are two ways to refute the assertion [that “phenomena are mind”]. According to logical reasoning, this would require that mind exhibit color and other distinctive features, because apparent phenomena have color and such features...

However, if mind had color and other distinctive features, it could manifest only its own color and its other distinctive features, and hence it could not manifest successively the countless colors and distinctive features of the variegated phenomena. This is obviously not the case, for awareness manifests innumerable phenomena one after the other as its display, dynamic energy and adornment—all of which manifest successively to the human mind. Longchenpa goes on to say (*ibidem*, p. 85):

It would also require that mind be external or that apparent phenomena be internal, and so their actual relationship would be thrown into chaos. And it would require that when one died the universe would collapse at the same time. In these and other ways, the assertion is disproved by its logical absurdity [as corresponds to the method of *prasanga* or *reductio ad absurdum*]...

And then (*ibidem*, pp. 86-87):

‘Ordinary mind’ refers to the eight modes of consciousness and their associated mental events, which together constitute the adventitious distortions affecting beings in the three realms [of *samsara*]. ‘Primordial awareness’ refers to the naturally occurring timeless awareness having no substance or characteristics [that is] the basic space of *samsara* and *nirvana*... While that which manifests as *samsara* and *nirvana* is understood to be the dynamic energy of awareness, one should further understand that awareness itself is an unceasing ground for the arising of things, although it has never existed as anything, whether of *samsara* or *nirvana*.

Apparent objects are understood to be clearly apparent yet unthinkable and ineffable, and never to have been mind or anything other than mind, [for they are] empty and yet clearly apparent, groundless, and timelessly pure. When freedom occurs, the dynamic energy and display [of awareness], in being [realized to be] groundless, are [realized to be] naturally pure—which is like awakening from a dream. Thus one should understand that the [Awake] awareness that is [nondually] aware of itself [as well as of sense-data and so on], without ever having wavered from the unchanging *dharmakaya* [that is] its original state of natural rest, is uncontaminated by any substance or characteristics, [as these have never existed in truth and thus have been timelessly void, or, what is the same, pure]...

All of the above is most relevant in regard to Wilber’s usage of the Brahmanic concept of the *sakshin*, which he seems to have attempted to unify with incompatible Buddhist concepts. In particular, in the electronic bulletin of the Association of Transpersonal Psychology, he once gave what he referred to as an instance of “what Buddhists call pointing out instructions,” but in which he pretended to introduce the *sakshin* (rather than the primordial awareness featuring the three kayas, which is what Buddhist “pointing out instructions” traditionally introduce), and which expressed views of *Vedanta* that are incompatible with Buddhism and with the manner in which the latter system presents its pit instructions—which means that the instructions Wilber was providing, rather than coming from an

existing lineage, were but his own concoction. (Wilber says he does not assume the guru role because he is a *pandita*, and this would be wise, for in order to be a guru one has to be officially appointed by one's guru as his or her successor, and the same must have happened with one's guru, and with one's guru's guru, and so on until the very source of the lineage, which must lie in a *tönpa* [*ston pa*] or Primordial Revealer. However, then he pretends to give "pointing out instructions," which are traditionally given by gurus and not so by *panditas*—and the instructions he gives are his own creation rather than the teachings of a *tönpa*.) His instructions read:

So Who Are You?

The witnessing of awareness can persist through waking, dreaming and deep sleep. The Witness is fully available in any state, including your own present state of awareness right now.

So I'm going to talk you into this state, or try to, using what are known in Buddhism as 'pointing out instructions'.

I am not going to try to get you into a different state of consciousness, or an altered state of consciousness, or a non-ordinary state. I am going to simply point out something that is already occurring in your own present, ordinary, natural state.

So let's start by just being aware of the world around us. Look out there at the sky, and just relax your mind; let your mind and the sky mingle. Notice the clouds floating by. Notice that this takes no effort on your part. Your present awareness, in which these clouds are floating, is very simple, very easy, effortless, spontaneous. You simply notice that there is an effortless awareness of the clouds.

The same is true of those trees, and those birds, and those rocks. You simply and effortlessly witness them. Look now at the sensations in your own body. You can be aware of whatever bodily feelings are present—perhaps pressure where you are sitting, perhaps warmth in your tummy, maybe tightness in your neck. But even if these feelings are tight and tense, you can easily be aware of them. These feelings arise in your present awareness, and that awareness is very simple, easy, effortless, spontaneous.

You simply and effortlessly witness them. Look at the thoughts arising in your mind. You might notice various images, symbols, concepts, desires, hopes and fears, all spontaneously arising in your awareness. They arise, stay a bit, and pass. These thoughts and feelings arise in your present awareness, and that awareness is very simple, effortless, spontaneous. You simply and effortlessly witness them. So notice: you can see the clouds float by

because you are not those clouds—you are the witness of those clouds.

You can feel bodily feelings because you are not those feelings—you are the witness of those feelings. You can see thoughts float by because you are not those thoughts—you are the witness of those thoughts. Spontaneously and naturally, these things all arise, on their own, in your present, effortless awareness.

So who are you? You are not objects out there, you are not feelings, you are not thoughts—you are effortlessly aware of all those, so you are not those. Who or what are you? Say it this way to yourself: I have feelings, but I am not those feelings. Who am I? I have thoughts, but I am not those thoughts. Who am I? I have desires, but I am not those desires. Who am I?

So you push back into the source of your own awareness. You push back into the Witness, and you rest in the Witness. I am not objects, not feelings, not desires, not thoughts. But then people usually make a big mistake. They think that if they rest in the Witness, they are going to see something or feel something—something really neat and special. But you won't see anything.

If you see something, that is just another object—another feeling, another thought, another sensation, another image. But those are all objects; those are what you are not. Now, as you rest in the Witness—realizing, I am not objects, I am not feelings, I am not thoughts—all you will notice is a sense of freedom, a sense of liberation, a sense of release—release from the terrible constriction of identifying with these puny little finite objects, your little body and little mind and little ego, all of which are objects that can be seen, and thus are not the true Seer, the real Self, the pure Witness, which is what you really are.

So you won't see anything in particular. Whatever is arising is fine. Clouds float by in the sky, feelings float by in the body, thoughts float by in the mind—and you can effortlessly witness all of them. They all spontaneously arise in your own present, easy, effortless awareness.

And this witnessing awareness is not itself anything specific you can see. It is just a vast, background sense of freedom—or pure emptiness—and in that pure emptiness, which you are, the entire manifest world arises. You are that freedom, openness, emptiness—and not any itty-bitty thing that arises in it. Resting in that empty, free, easy, effortless witnessing, notice that the clouds are arising in

the vast space of your awareness. The clouds are arising within you—so much so, you can taste the clouds, you are one with the clouds. It is as if they are on this side of your skin, they are so close. The sky and your awareness have become one, and all things in the sky are floating effortlessly through your own awareness. You can kiss the sun, swallow the mountain, they are that close. Zen says ‘Swallow the Pacific Ocean in a single gulp’, and that’s the easiest thing in the world, when inside and outside are no longer two, when subject and object are nondual, when the looker and looked at are One Taste. You see?

We have seen that voidness can be:

(1) “illusory experiences” (*nyams*) such (i) as the experiences of absence of thought, of lack of concreteness, etc., that manifest in the meditation practice of calming the mind (Skt., *śamatha*; Tib., *zhi gnas*), or (ii) the nonexistence of entities in the way in which they appear to exist, which appears as an object to the mental subject (and hence is within *samsara*) as the outcome of the practice of insight meditation (Skt., *vipashyana*; Tib., *lhag mthong*) of the *Sandhinirmochana Sutra*, the *Shravakabhumi* chapter of Asanga’s *Yogacharabhumi*, the three *Bhavanakramas* by Shantarakshita and the three by Kamalashila, and in Tsongkhapa’s *Lamrim* works. (In 1.ii, the definition of the concept of voidness varies according to the school.)

(2) An aspect of the realization of the absolute truth of Mahayana (which the *Mahamadhyamaka* School defines as indivisibility of voidness and appearances and which the Uma Zhentongpa [*dbU ma gZhan stong pa*] School defines as indivisibility of voidness and awareness) that takes place in a gnosis beyond the subject-object duality; and

(3) The *dharmakaya*, which *qua* Base is the essence (*ngo bo*) aspect of the Base and the dang (*gdangs*) form of manifestation of energy—which is the most prominent aspect of the Buddha-nature as realized in the Dzogchen practice of Tekchö (*khregs chod*).

Voidness *qua* illusory experience and voidness *qua* the perception of the fact that entities do not exist in the way in which they appear to exist could by no means be the same as the *sakshin* or witness of *Vedanta*, which would have to correspond to the awareness that is aware of the illusory experience, or that is aware of the fact that entities do not exist in the way in which they appear to exist: this type of voidness is an object, and from the standpoint of *Vedanta*, to claim that voidness thus understood is the witness, would be an error of the same kind as asserting any other object of our perception to be the witness. (The reasons why in itself and by itself voidness is neither the absolute truth of the Mahayana nor the condition of Dzogchen were considered

in Capriles [2004], and Capriles [2005].)

In their turn, voidness *qua* aspect of the direct realization of the absolute truth of the Mahayana that takes place beyond the subject-object duality, and voidness *qua* the most prominent aspect of the gnosis in which, in the practice of Tekchö, the *dharmakaya* is realized, could not be the *sakshin* or disinterested witness, because in these realizations there is no witness that may appear to be different from, or at a distance from, that which is realized utterly beyond the subject-object duality.

Furthermore, Wilber says that the result of applying his “pit instructions” does not imply any extraordinary occurrence, but the reGnition (of) primordial awareness that instantly puts an end to the subject-object duality and that instantly results in the spontaneous liberation of whatever thought may be manifest is a most extraordinary occurrence indeed: it is the revolution whereby dualistic, *samsaric* experience is replaced by nondual realization.

At any rate, the *sakshin* or Witness could not be the same as the primordial awareness introduced in the Dzogchen teachings and discussed in the *Mahamadhyamaka* and Uma Zhentongpa philosophical schools of the Mahayana, for the *sakshin* or disinterested witness is defined as being different from feelings, thoughts, sensations and images, which as shown in the quotations included above in this note is not the case with primordial awareness: the schools in question make it perfectly clear that apparent phenomena are neither mind nor awareness, and yet may not be said to be other than, or different or separate from, mind or awareness. Feelings, thoughts, sensations and images arise in primordial awareness just as reflections in a mirror, and thus their relation to that awareness is like that of reflections to the mirror in which they are reflected: they cannot be said to be awareness (since awareness has no end in time, if they were awareness they would not have an end in time; since awareness has no shape or color, if they were awareness they would have no shape or color); however, they cannot be said to be other than awareness, for they are not made of a substance other than awareness, and they cannot be said to be separate from awareness, for they cannot exist separately from it. As Longchenpa tells us (Longchen Rabjam [Longchenpa], 1998, p. 84), all apparent phenomena that seem to exist in their own right, are appearances manifesting to the mind and in fact are nothing other than manifestations appearing to the mind; though they appear to be other than the mind, like dreams, illusions and so forth, they are by nature empty, and, being unthinkable and ineffable, they have never been anything other than mind, nor have they ever been mind either: they are empty and yet clearly apparent, groundless, and timelessly pure.

The *sakshin* is supposed *not* to be any of the apparent phenomena it witnesses, but to be different from these,

and thus it could not be the primordial awareness featuring the three kayas that is introduced by Buddhist pit instructions, which may not be said to be different from the phenomena it manifests: it will have to be the illusion of a separate knower that, according to the teachings of Dzogchen *Atiyoga* and to those of the Inner Tantras of the Path of Transformation, arises as a result of the delusory valuation of the threefold thought-structure. Moreover, from the standpoint of the Dzogchen teachings, to tell oneself, “I am not objects, I am not feelings, I am not thoughts” (as Wilber asks us to do) and to believe from the heart that these thoughts express a truth, would be a manifestation of the delusory valuation of thought—and if we are actually experiencing that we are at a distance from objects, feelings and thoughts, this *proves* that we are taking ourselves to be the illusory mental subject that appears to be separate from its objects and which is one of the poles of the dualistic, intentional structure of knowledge that arises as a result of the delusory valuation of the supersubtle thought structure called the threefold thought-structure.

In its turn, the realization of rigpa may not be described as “a sense of freedom, a sense of liberation, a sense of release from the terrible constriction of identifying with these puny little finite objects, your little body and little mind and little ego, all of which are objects that can be seen,” for the experience these words describe can only arise as a result of the delusory valuation of concepts. Rigpa is the all-liberating single gnosis or *chikshe kundröl* (*gcik shes kun grol*) beyond the subject-object duality, and since in rigpa there is no subject or looker and therefore there is no object or looked at, it is incorrect to say that subject and object are nondual or that the looker and the looked at are one taste: if there is noticing, this is not rigpa. In the words of the Trungpa Rinpoche translation of Jigme Lingpa’s *The Lion’s Roar* (Trungpa, 1972):

Some individuals will be able to use both thoughts and the absence of thought as meditation, but *it should be born in mind that that which notes* (i.e., *notices*) *what is happening is the tight grip of Ego.*

If we are noticing that there is as “a sense of freedom, a sense of liberation, a sense of release from the terrible constriction of identifying with these puny little finite objects, your little body and little mind and little ego, all of which are objects that can be seen,” then this is a manifestation of the “tight grip of delusion” rather than rigpa, which (is) a gnosis utterly free from the subject-object duality, characterized by the spontaneous liberation of whatever arises. Becoming aware that we are not objects, feelings or thoughts, and as a result of this becoming aware of a sense of freedom and so on, are manifestations of delusion, all of which would liberate themselves spontaneously upon the manifestation of rigpa, for in the state of rigpa, whatever manifests is like a

drawing on water. Rigpa (is) the absolutely free condition of *nirvana* that cannot be described; what can be described is the spontaneous liberation of all that arises when rigpa is manifest, as well as the whole of the experiences that are not rigpa.

Vedanta tells us that what we really are is the true Seer, the real Self, the pure Witness. A seer is one who sees, and a witness is one who witness; however, in the state of rigpa, though the whole of the sensory continuum is manifest, there is no seeing, witnessing or noticing, for in rigpa neither that continuum or anything that may be singled out within it is taken as object and perceived (and if such delusory perceptions arise, they liberate themselves spontaneously upon arising). If there were seeing or witnessing, this would be “the tight grip of ego,” rather than the condition of rigpa beyond the subject-object duality in which whatever manifests liberates itself spontaneously upon arising, like a drawing on water.

To conclude, in the *Upanishads*, in the *Vedanta Sutra*, in Gaudapada’s *Mayavada* philosophy and in the *Advaita Vedanta* philosophy of Shankaracharya, the concept of *sakshin* may seem to partly correspond to that which Kant called “pure apperception,” which according to the philosopher from Königsberg is the condition of possibility of “empirical apperception” or awareness that one is perceiving, and which as such may partly correspond to a literal understanding of Sartre’s (1943/1980) definition of the *Soi* or Self as non-thetic, non-positional awareness (of) consciousness (which literally understood would refer to a non-thetic, non-positional awareness [of] there being a consciousness that is aware of an object different and separate from itself). In Part II of *Capriles* (work in progress 1), I explained in great detail that if Sartre’s *Soi* or Self were thus understood, it would consist in the dualistic delusion inherent in *samsara* and as such would radically contrast with the nirvanic conditions of Dzogchen *qua* Path and Dzogchen *qua* Fruit. If Shankaracharya’s *sakshin* were the same as Sartre’s *Soi* or Self as I have understood it here, the distinctions just made between the latter and what the Dzogchen teachings call Dzogchen would be the differences between Shankaracharya’s *sakshin* and what the Dzogchen teachings call Dzogchen... whether *qua* Base, *qua* Path or *qua* Fruit. (In the last section of Appendix II to Chapter I of *Capriles* [1994] I discuss some of the doctrines of Shankaracharya and show that they involve a subtle dualism which is somehow similar to the one that may be appreciated in Plotinus. However, there is no space in this paper to include the arguments in question.)

(Though the *sakshin* of *advaita vedanta* and so on could not be the same as the primordial awareness of the Dzogchen teachings, I would not discard the *possibility* that the *samvid* of Kashmiri Shaivism be the same as the pri-

mordial awareness of the Dzogchen teachings; for a discussion of the concept of *samvid* in Kashmiri Shaivism cf. Pandey [1963].)

⁶⁶According to the *Yogachara* School of the Mahayana, release from *samsara* involves *nirodha* (cf. Capriles, 2004); however, this is the only school of the Mahayana that has ever made such claim, and this school is not one of the genuinely nondual Buddhist traditions.

Though *nirodha* has different meanings in different schools of Hinduism and Buddhism, in none of its senses can the term be correctly applied to the state of rigpa that constitutes both the Path and the Fruit of the primordial *yoga* (*Atiyoga*) of total plenitude and perfection (*rdzogs chen*): this state does in no sense whatsoever constitute a cessation because, far from excluding all kinds of Gnitive activity, it implies a “total freedom of Gnitiveness:” it involves an absolute Gnitive spontaneity that is in no way limited, for it is totally free from the straitjacket of the delusory valuation of thought. Furthermore, the state in question is not a mere voidness; though purity or *ka dag*, which is voidness, is one of its two main aspects, the other aspect is what is known as spontaneous perfection or self-accomplishment (*lhun grub*): a myriad of perfect, self-accomplished manifestations with a consummate functionality. (A more detailed definition of the terms *katak* and *lhundrub*, as well as a more complete explanation of the reasons why rigpa is not a cessation, are provided in Capriles [2000a, 2003, 2004, work in progress 2 and work in progress 3].)

⁶⁷If the Path one has followed is based on a single principle, and on the basis of one’s experience of that Path one tries to understand other Paths which combine different principles including the principle on which the Path one followed is based, one will correctly understand those aspects of the Paths in question that are based on the principle of the Path one has followed, but not necessarily other aspects of those Paths. However, if one has obtained realization through the vehicle that the *Samten Migdrön* (*bSamgtan Mig sgron*) calls the “primordial ancestor of all vehicles” (i.e., the Dzogchen *Atiyoga*), one will understand the principles of all Paths and vehicles.

⁶⁸See note 32 to this paper.

⁶⁹In 1960, Jung wrote (Jung, this Ed., 1972):

I had to abandon the idea of the superordinate position of the ego... I saw that everything, all paths I had been following, all steps I had taken, were leading back to a single point — namely, to the mid-point. It became increasingly plain to me that the mandala is the centre. It is the exponent of all paths. It is the path to the centre, to individuation.

... I knew that in finding the mandala as an expression of the self I had attained what was for me the ultimate.

This point is also clearly made in Jung, this Ed., 1968, Jung, 1964, and Jung, 1928. It is related to the difference between Self and ego, which Jung dealt with in Jung, 1919/1975 and Jung, 1964. Of course, Jung is not speaking of the ultimate in the Buddhist sense of the term.

⁷⁰Also cited in Daniels (2004, p. 76). The fact that I refer to Daniels’ work does not imply I admit that people may bestow on their own selves the titles traditions confer on their most special representatives; all such titles have been traditionally bestowed by the official representatives of the tradition to which the honored individual belongs.

⁷¹These three senses were discussed in note 10 to this paper.

⁷²I have in mind, in particular, the theories of Melanie Klein, Susan Isaacs and Donald W. Winnicott. Also some specifications by the American Otto Fenichel are worth incorporating to the system in question.

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ⁱThis article's contents are an adaptation of the eighth chapter of my upcoming book, *Beyond Being, Beyond Mind, Beyond History: A Dzogchen-Founded Metatranspersonal, Metapostmodern Philosophy and Psychology for Survival in an Age of Communion*, the provisional version of which might already be available in my webpage (<http://eliascapriles.dzogchen.ru>) by the time this paper is published.